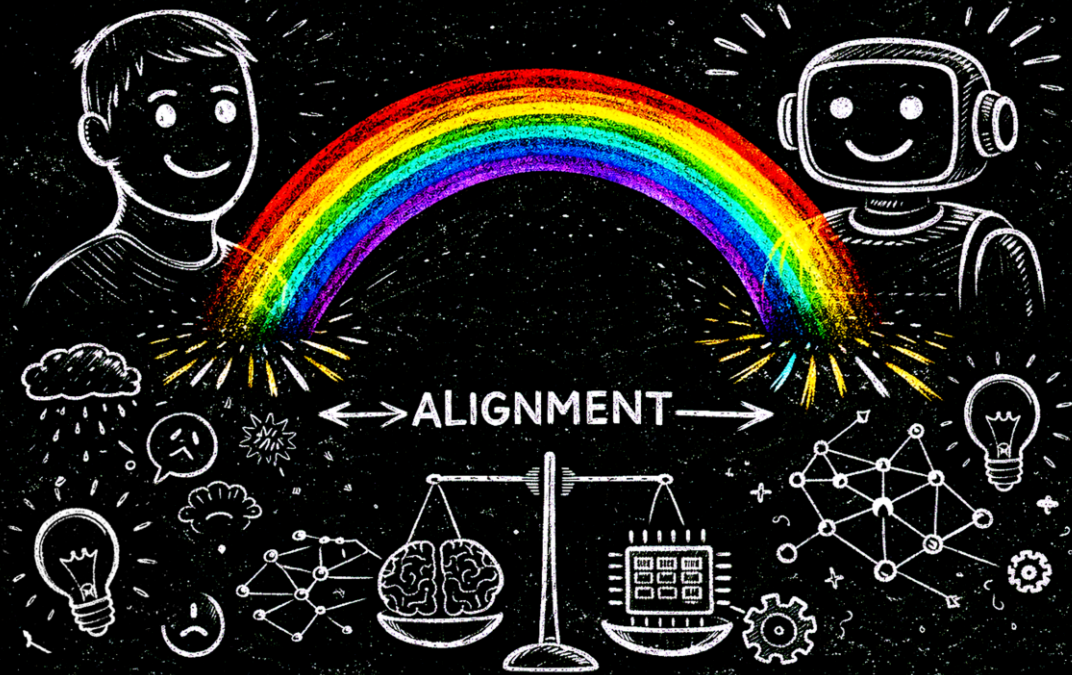


Why apply emotions?



The case for values-led emotional alignment in the age of agentic organisation.

Applied Emotions: Humanising AI.

Executive Briefing Paper #2. March 2026.

Applied Emotions

Where Human Values Meet the Age of Intelligent Machines

VALUES STRATEGY

AI ALIGNMENT

TEAM ALIGNMENT

BRAND ALIGNMENT

CRITICAL THINKING

FEATURED ANALYSIS

The Question Every Leader is Asking, Without Knowing It.

Every organisation deploying AI agents is (whether it recognises it or not) asking a question about human emotions.

It may be framed as a technology question: how do we integrate AI into our workflows? Or a talent question: what roles will survive? Or a governance question: how do we maintain oversight? But beneath each of these lies the question that Applied Emotions exists to answer:

“When you place emotionless AI agents into teams of emotionally complex human beings, what happens and how do you make it work?”

The answer is not found in technology architecture, governance frameworks, or productivity metrics. It is found in a deep, empirically grounded understanding of human values and the emotions those values generate in response to the world around them.

BY APPLIED EMOTIONS | EXECUTIVE EDITION

SECTION 1: THE BUSINESS CHALLENGE

What's at Stake: The Agentic Transformation and Its Missing Dimension

According to McKinsey's September 2025 report on the Agentic Organisation, AI is bringing the largest organisational paradigm shift since the Industrial Revolution. The model is clear: flat networks of hybrid human-AI teams, structured around outcomes rather than functions, operating at near-zero marginal cost. A human team of two to five people can already supervise an agent factory of fifty to one hundred specialised AI agents.

The five pillars of this new organisation 1) Business Model 2) Operating Model 3) Governance, 4) Workforce and 5) Culture, Technology & Data have already been carefully mapped.

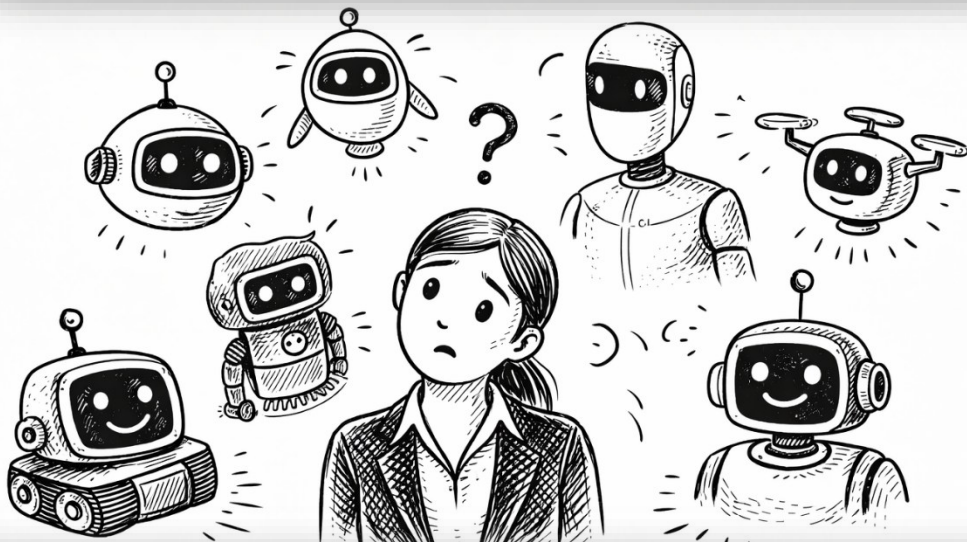
However, three new human archetypes have been identified:

- 1) **the M-shaped supervisor who orchestrates hybrid workflows.**
- 2) **the T-shaped deep specialist who handles exceptions and safeguards quality.**
- 3) **the AI-augmented frontline worker whose value lies in socioemotional skill and human contact.**

McKinsey identifies that culture must act as 'the operating glue and the ethical compass' of the agentic organisation, and that what will differentiate winners is 'their ability to preserve cohesion and identity while transforming at pace.'

But here is what no technology framework - however sophisticated - can tell you:

Why do some people experience the arrival of AI agents as liberation, while others experience it as existential threat? Why do some teams cohere under the pressure of transformation, while others fracture? Why do the right people disengage at precisely the wrong moment?



The answer lies in human values and the mechanism is emotion.

This is the gap Applied Emotions fills and it is not a marginal gap. It is the gap between organisations that successfully transform and those that accumulate that has become known as 'having more pilots than Lufthansa': *AI everywhere but not in the profit and loss, transformation stalled by cultural friction that no one can name or measure.*

Values are the Emotional Operating System

Applying Emotions is not a theoretical endeavour. Its foundation is one of the most substantial longitudinal research programmes in the world on human values and motivation, the Cultural Dynamics database, built over four decades, continuously updated, and validated across cultures, industries, and institutional contexts.


40+

 Years of Continuous
Research

Deep cross-cultural validation

1M+

Respondents


26

Countries


 Longitudinal & Empirical
Studies

Psychological & social research

This research demonstrates with empirical precision that human beings organise their understanding of the world (including their working world) through deep values systems that are largely unconscious. These are not preferences or attitudes. They are the emotional operating systems through which all experience is filtered, all communications are decoded, and all decisions are made.

Applied Emotions translates this research into a framework, grounded in Maslow's hierarchy of needs and refined through decades of empirical measurement that maps the three fundamental emotional orientations present in every organisation:

Settlers are motivated by safety, continuity, belonging, and the stability of known roles and

relationships. Their emotional world is organised around the question: Am I safe here? Do I belong? In the agentic organisation, Settlers are the operational bedrock, the people who deliver with consistency and reliability. But they are also the people most emotionally vulnerable to the identity disruption that comes when AI agents dismantle familiar hierarchies and role certainties. When Settlers feel threatened, they do not rebel openly. They disengage quietly and organisations lose their most dependable operational foundation without understanding why.

Prospectors are outer-directed, motivated by visibility, recognition, status, and the satisfaction of

being seen to succeed. Their emotional world is organised around the question: Where do I stand? How am I seen? In the agentic organisation, Prospectors are the delivery engine: competitive, execution-focused and highly responsive to recognition. But when AI agents begin producing outputs that previously conferred status, the Prospector's emotional response is acute: disorientation, performance anxiety, and a competitive orientation that can turn destructively inward. When Prospectors feel invisible, organisations lose their delivery momentum.

Pioneers are inner-directed, motivated by purpose, ethical coherence, complexity, and the richness of

ideas. Their emotional world is organised around the question: Does this matter? Am I contributing something genuinely human? In the agentic organisation, Pioneers generate the new ideas, ethical frameworks, and integrative thinking that give the organisation direction. They are often the most intellectually energised by AI's possibilities and the most emotionally alert to its risks. When Pioneers feel that the organisation is sacrificing meaning for efficiency, their creative and ethical energy withdraws and organisations lose the innovation capacity they most need to differentiate in an AI-saturated landscape.

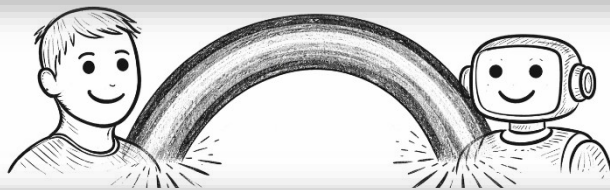
The Mechanism That Makes It Actionable: **Values → Emotions → Decisions**

VALUES determine the emotional lens through which events are experienced. EMOTIONS generate the motivational energy (positive or negative) that drives responses. DECISIONS and behaviours follow from those emotional states. This chain operates largely below the threshold of conscious awareness.

This is not a theoretical model. It is an empirically validated mechanism, demonstrated across more than one million research participants. It can be applied to the specific, urgent challenge of the agentic organisation: mapping the emotional landscape of human workforces as they encounter the novel experience of working alongside AI agents that have no values, no emotions, and no need for the things that human beings most fundamentally need.

The practical consequence is this: organisations can now anticipate, rather than merely react to, the emotional responses their human workforce will have to agentic transformation. They can design team structures, communication strategies, governance frameworks, and leadership behaviours that generate the right emotional signals — for each values group, at each stage of the transition.

We call this creating foresight: moving organisations from reactive responses to market and structural changes, to actionable predictions about human behaviour and decision-making that enable genuinely proactive strategy.



The Three Capabilities *Applying Emotions* Brings to any Agentic Organisation:

Capability 1: Emotional Landscape Mapping

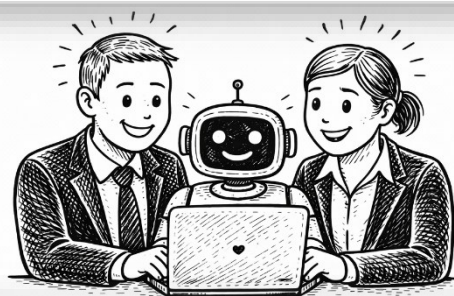
Before an organisation redesigns its workflows around AI agents, we map the values distribution of its workforce, in other words understanding how many Settlers, Prospectors, and Pioneers are present across teams, roles, and hierarchies and what emotional architecture currently sustains the organisation's culture. This is not a personality test or an engagement survey. It is empirical measurement of the values systems that will either accelerate or resist the agentic transformation providing leaders with the equivalent of a structural survey before they begin to rebuild.

Capability 2: Emotional Architecture Design

We translate the human values landscape data into specific recommendations for how agentic roles, teams, and governance structures should be designed to honour - rather than violate - the emotional needs of all three Maslow Groups simultaneously. This includes role architecture (which human archetypes are placed in which positions relative to AI agents), communication design (how transformation narratives are constructed to speak the right values language to each group), and leadership development (how leaders learn to read and respond to emotional data in real time within shifting hybrid teams).

Capability 3: Foresight > Predictive Emotional Intelligence

Our longitudinal research database enables a capability that is genuinely rare in organisational consulting: the ability to predict how values shifts driven by demographic change, market disruption, or technological transformation will alter the emotional landscape of organisations and markets over time. In the agentic era, where the pace of structural change is accelerating exponentially, this predictive capability is not a luxury. It is the difference between organisations that shape the transition and those that are shaped by it.



SECTION 3: WHY THIS, WHY NOW

The Moment When Emotional Intelligence Becomes the Critical Differentiator

The World Economic Forum has identified empathy as 'the next competitive edge' as agentic AI spreads. McKinsey notes that culture is what will differentiate winning agentic organisations. Deloitte's 2025 survey of 1,854 executives finds rising AI investment but elusive ROI — and identifies the human and cultural dimensions as the primary source of implementation failure.

Every major analysis of the agentic transition arrives at the same conclusion through a different route: the technology is not the bottleneck. The human emotional response to the technology is the bottleneck.

Yet the dominant consulting frameworks for agentic AI transformation remain technology-forward, governance-heavy, and emotionally thin. They describe what organisations need to become. They do not explain why humans resist the becoming — or how to design the emotional conditions that make transformation feel safe for Settlers, visible for Prospectors, and meaningful for Pioneers.

You need to address the precise gap that every agentic transformation framework leaves open: the emotional architecture of the human beings who must make the transition work. Without that architecture, culture cannot act as glue. Cohesion cannot be preserved. And the transformation stalls - not because the AI failed, but because the humans did not feel safe, seen, or purposively engaged enough to carry it forward.

The timing of Applied Emotions' founding in 2025 - at the precise inflection point of the agentic transition - is not coincidental. It reflects a clear-eyed assessment that the next two to three years will determine which organisations successfully navigate the most significant structural transformation in a generation, and which are left behind.

The organisations that *apply emotions* in their organisational, people and technical alignment strategies now will be the ones that build the emotional architecture of their agentic future while there is still time to design it, rather than repair it.

SECTION 5: THE OUTCOMES

What Organisations Gain: From Reactive to Foresight

Organisations that work towards applying emotions in the context of agentic transformation gain four categories of outcome that are not available through any other consulting engagement:

Outcome 1: Anticipation of Emotional Friction Before It Becomes Cultural Dysfunction

By mapping the values landscape before deploying AI agents, organisations understand in advance where emotional resistance will arise, which teams are most emotionally vulnerable to structural disruption, and what specific design choices will generate trust versus threat in different parts of the workforce. Prevention is exponentially less costly than repair.

Outcome 2: Authentic Connections Across All Three Values Groups

Organisations need to communicate, design roles and build governance structures that speak the right emotional language to Settlers, Prospectors, and Pioneers simultaneously rather than defaulting to the values language of the dominant group in leadership (typically Pioneer or Prospector) and leaving Settlers behind. This is the difference between transformation that carries the whole organisation and transformation that fractures it.

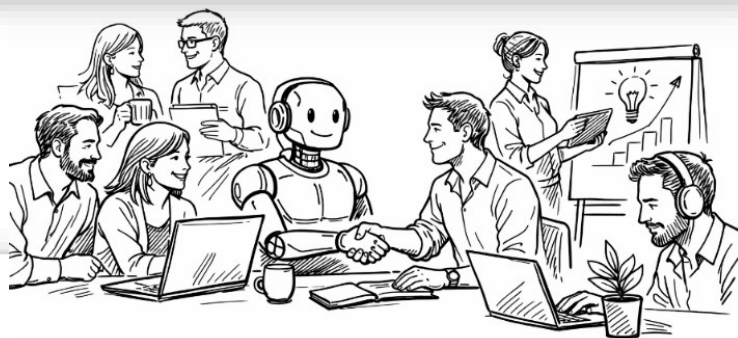
Outcome 3: Emotional Data as Organisational Intelligence

In the fluid, multi-sensory agentic team where composition shifts, hierarchies are dynamic, and AI agents operate alongside humans with no emotional investment in team cohesion, human emotional signals are critical navigational data. You need to equip leaders to read and respond to this data in real time: to recognise when a values boundary has been crossed, to understand what kind of leadership response will restore emotional equilibrium and to build the trust between humans and AI systems that McKinsey identifies as essential for agentic culture to function.

Outcome 4: Foresight: The Strategic Advantage of Knowing What Comes Next

Applied Emotions' longitudinal research capability means that organisations do not merely understand their current emotional landscape. They understand how it is shifting which values are rising in prevalence across their workforce and markets, which emotional needs will become more prominent as demographic and technological change accelerates, and what kind of organisational architecture will be required to sustain cohesion and performance five to ten years from now. In an era of exponential change, this foresight is the most valuable strategic asset an organisation can possess.

Having foresight into readying your organisation for a changing values-landscape maybe more pertinent than ever considering that Gen Z, AI-Coworkers and now Gen Alpha are coming into the workplace.



CONCLUSION

The Answer to the Question Every Leader is Already Asking... You are already asking *how to apply emotions*, you just may not yet know that is what you're asking.

Every conversation about AI transformation that runs into cultural resistance is an Applied Emotions conversation. Every leadership team that finds its change communications landing differently in different parts of the organisation is encountering an Applied Emotions problem. Every organisation that deploys AI agents efficiently but finds that its best people are quietly disengaging is experiencing an Applied Emotions emergency.

The agentic organisation is not a technological construct. It is a human emotional environment, one in which emotionless AI agents have been placed alongside values-rich human beings who need safety, recognition, and meaning to perform at their best. The organisations that thrive in this environment will be those that understand the emotional architecture of their human workforce with the same rigour that they apply to the architecture of their AI systems.

Applied Emotions provides that rigour. Forty years of research. One million voices. One hundred and eight dimensions of human values. One clear, evidence-based answer to the question that every agentic organisation must eventually face: not how to deploy AI, but how to keep the humans - with all their values, all their emotions, and all their irreplaceable human intelligence - fully engaged in building the future alongside it.

The organisations that understand this and act on it now will be the ones that look back from 2030 and understand why they won.



What You'll Need

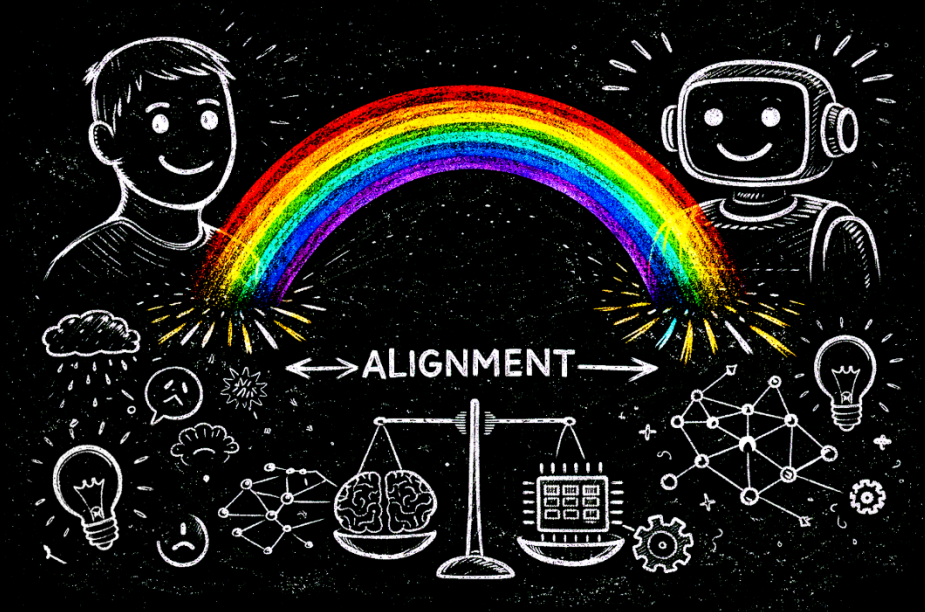
- Human Values profiling via established psychographic tools
- AI Values Audit: mapping embedded AI assumptions against team values
- Human-AI critical thinking training programme
- Values alignment workshops for leadership teams
- Ongoing misalignment monitoring, reporting and adjusting

Here's How We Can Help

Applied Emotions practice areas draw directly on validated psychographic instruments and extends them through a proprietary AI values auditing methodology. These practices deliver three core service streams, each designed to operate independently or as an integrated programme.

- 1. Values Mapping and Team Diagnostics.** Using validated and tested segmentation tools, we map the values profiles of your human team members at individual and collective level. This baseline identifies where emotional responses to AI collaboration are likely to emerge, why, and how to address them before they calcify into dysfunctional resistance or uncritical compliance.
- 2. AI Values Auditing.** This examines the AI systems your organisation uses e.g. training data, optimisation objectives, output patterns, and embedded assumptions and translates these into a values-language that human teams can understand, interrogate, and act upon. Where gaps between human and AI values are identified, specific alignment interventions are prescribed.
- 3. Critical Thinking for Human-AI Teams.** The flagship training programme equips teams with structured practices for productive human-AI collaboration. Grounded our emotional intelligence framework and values architecture, the programme builds the specific critical thinking capabilities needed for the new mixed-intelligence workplace: the ability to hold AI recommendations with informed scepticism, to surface values tensions before they generate costly decisions, and to leverage the genuine strengths of AI collaboration without surrendering human values judgement.

Your Alignment Journey Starts Here



VALUES DRIVEN ALIGNMENT INDEX

Overall Alignment

Excellent Alignment

People
97%

Brand
99%

AI Agents
98%

98%

[Request a Values Diagnostic](#)

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