

THE MIDDLE IS BREAKING

WHY TRANSFORMATION FAILS IN THE MIDDLE LAYERS

Summary: In this powerful conversation, [Cassandra Worthy](#), [Joya Bryant-Gibson](#), and [Laurie Ditch](#) explored the immense pressure middle managers face as they navigate uncertainty, support their teams, and translate strategy into action. They shared practical ways to build trust, create a shared language around emotion, and help people process change—reminding us that when we acknowledge emotions instead of avoiding them, we create the conditions for stronger leadership and more successful transformation.



What hearing the topic "The Middle is Breaking" Meant to the Panel

Joya Bryant-Gibson: *"Relief. I said to myself, 'Someone gets it.'"*

Middle managers sit between executive expectations and employee needs, trying to protect culture while delivering results. Constant leadership changes and shifting priorities can make even resilient leaders feel overwhelmed.

Laurie Ditch: *"The big thing right now is uncertainty."*

Organizations are asking middle managers to lead through ambiguity when they don't have all the answers themselves. They're expected to provide stability while navigating constant change. The "breaking" comes from prolonged uncertainty, competing demands, and lack of consistent support.

Key Takeaways

- 1 Middle managers aren't resisting change, they're carrying it.**
They're translating executive strategy, answering employee questions, protecting culture, and still expected to deliver results.
- 2 Uncertainty is one of the biggest challenges today.**
Managers don't always have answers, yet they're expected to inspire confidence anyway.
- 3 Emotion isn't the obstacle, it's information.**
Instead of ignoring difficult emotions, leaders can use them as signals that reveal what needs attention.
- 4 Human leadership creates better business outcomes.**
Support isn't just about tools and processes. It's about empathy, clarity, coaching, and consistent communication.
- 5 Organizations need to measure the human impact of change.**
As Joya shared: *"I want organizations to measure the human impact of change."*
Success shouldn't only be measured by timelines and deliverables, but also by how people are experiencing transformation.