Jackie Roby

Executive Leadership Advisor,
Decision Quality & Organizational Silence



When High Performers Go Quiet, Organizations Stop Learning

Gallup's 2026 Global Workplace Report puts the cost of low engagement at $10 trillion in lost productivity worldwide.

Your highest performers are leaving and nobody can point to the moment it started.

Jackie Roby calls it **Palatability Culture: the pattern where staying agreeable gets rewarded, and by the time someone quits, they've been quiet for months.**

The Behavior You're Rewarding is Not the Behavior You Think You're Rewarding

It's easy to mistake agreement for good decision-making and reward one while believing you're rewarding the other.

High performers learn this quickly. They stop voicing the objection that would have slowed a bad decision down. They wait to be asked before offering the idea which would have gotten cut anyway. They absorb friction instead of naming it, since naming it has a cost and staying quiet does not, at least not one anyone can see right away.

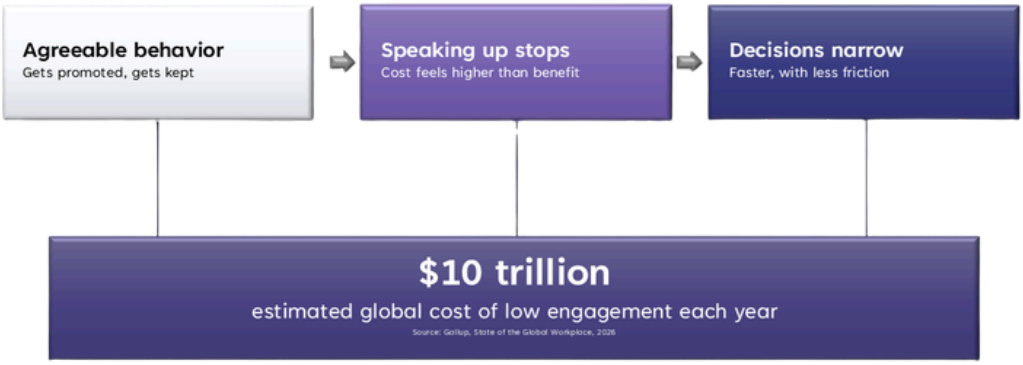
Low engagement costs the global economy $10 trillion in lost productivity every year (Gallup, 2026). Every one of your quiet high performers is a small piece of that number. This talk names why they go first.

A 2025 meta-analysis by Lainidi and colleagues found **silence is more strongly linked to burnout than voice is, which means the quiet employee may be more depleted than they look.**

Palatability Culture doesn't wait for a performance review. It starts in week one.

In interviews Jackie conducted while writing *Palatable, Profitable, & Dying Inside,* HR leaders described the same window over and over: the first 120 days. That's when a new hire learns what gets rewarded, no matter what the onboarding deck says. By day 90, most people have already made the call. Speak up or stay easygoing.

None of this shows up in a performance review. It shows up later, as a decision that gets made faster and worse, a leadership pipeline that looks empty, and a resignation that surprises everyone except the person who left.



Signature Keynote:

When High Performers Go Quiet

The Organizational Cost of Self-Silencing

Premise:
The employees your organization is most afraid to lose are often the ones already editing themselves down to keep the room comfortable.

Description:
Your highest performers are still showing up, still delivering, still saying they're “fine” in every check-in.

What doesn't show up in the check-in: they're absorbing conflict instead of naming it, editing the idea before it leaves the room, and getting smaller so the meeting stays easy.

None of it registers as a problem until they're gone.

This talk names **Palatability Culture**: what it costs an organization to reward the agreeable version of its best people, and what it takes to get their full contribution back into the room, not just their attendance.

You can watch it happen if you know where to look. Ideas that used to get raised in the room start getting refined in the hallway instead, after the meeting, when it feels safer. The person who used to push back is the same person, just waiting now to see which way the room is leaning before they say anything at all.

Ideal Audience:
Leadership teams, high-potential cohorts, and management populations inside organizations **where sponsorship and promotion already run on comfort as much as capability.** Sponsorship rarely happens in a meeting. It happens over drinks or on the golf course for a select few. The people missing out are often the last to find out they were ever being evaluated.

Audience Outcomes:

- Recognize the difference between an employee who agrees and one who has stopped bringing up disagreement
- Question whether their promotion and sponsorship patterns reward decision quality or reward ease
- Understand why silence and burnout track together more closely than silence and simple disengagement
- Practice one specific move for inviting dissent back into a meeting without staging a confrontation
- Leave with a shared vocabulary (Palatability Culture) for a pattern they could previously only describe as “vibes”

What Changes After the Talk

A keynote does not fix retention, burnout, or a leadership pipeline. What it can do is give a leadership team a shared, specific language for a pattern they've been managing around without naming.

After this talk, leaders have a name for the **gap between an employee who is compliant and one who is contributing**. Managers have a concrete question to bring into their next 1:1: what has this person stopped saying, and when did they stop saying it? Promotion conversations start to include a check most systems currently skip: did we promote decision quality, or did we promote ease?

This is the start of a conversation, not the end of one. Organizations that get the most from this talk pair it with a working session on where Palatability Culture shows up in their own promotion and performance systems.

From the Room to the Work That Follows

In the room

Audience hears

The term "Palatability Culture," named for the first time

Audience recognizes

The difference between agreement and an idea that got edited out

Audience feels

Recognition, sometimes discomfort, at a pattern they hadn't named

After the room

Leaders gain

Shared language for a pattern they could only describe as "vibes" before

Managers bring into 1:1s

One question: what has this person stopped saying, and when did they stop?

Promotion conversations add

A check: did we promote decision quality, or did we promote ease?

The Three Stages of Palatability Culture

Palatability Culture develops in three recognizable stages.

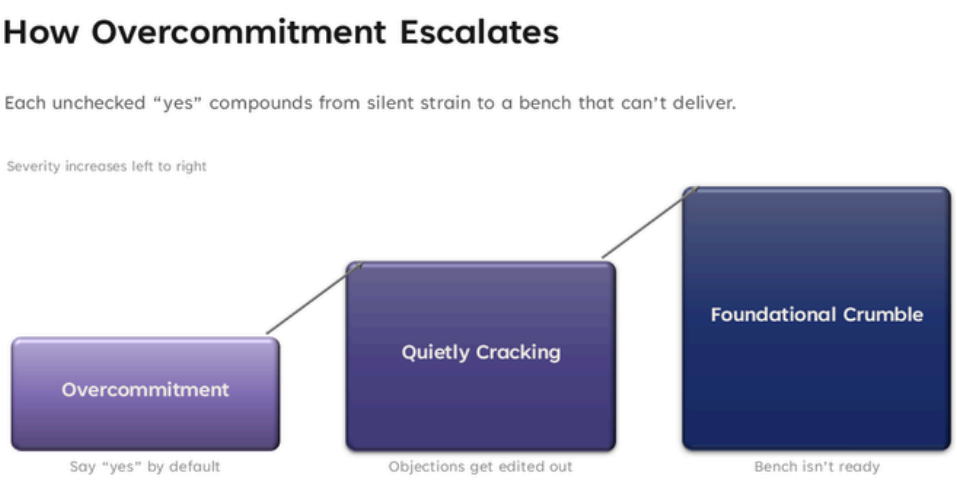
Overcommitment: High performers take on more, say “yes” by default, and get rewarded for capacity rather than contribution.

Quietly Cracking: The cost of speaking up starts to outweigh the benefit. Objections, ideas, and early warnings get edited out before they reach a meeting. Everything still looks fine from the outside, since silence and strong performance can look identical for a long time.

Foundational Crumble: Decisions get made on less real information. The bench that was supposed to be ready for the next level isn't. People leave, and the exit interview never quite explains why.

Gartner's 2025 research on workplace culture found the share of **employees willing to recommend their organization as a great place to work fell from 35 percent in 2022 to 26.5 percent in 2025, while the passive, disengaged share rose to 41.4 percent**.

That is Stage Two, at scale, across the workforce most leaders are still measuring as “fine”.



Why Jackie Roby



Jackie Roby spent close to two decades inside performance-driven industries, including hospitality and corporate environments, where staying easy to work with was often the fastest route to advancement and the surest way to go unheard once she arrived.

Palatable, Profitable, and Dying Inside, her book on workplace behavior, argues that **organizations reward the quietest version of their best people**, and pay for it later in slower decisions, thinner leadership pipelines, and turnover no one can quite explain.

That argument comes out of her own advisory work, and it's grounded in peer-reviewed research: Edmondson on psychological safety, Morrison and Milliken on organizational silence, Detert and Edmondson on self-censorship, and a 2025 review by Lainidi and colleagues linking silence to burnout, alongside current workplace data from Gallup, Gartner, McKinsey, and Deloitte.

She now advises organizations directly on where this pattern shows up in their own leadership pipeline, and has delivered keynotes and workshops for Guardian, Reliance Matrix, Black & Veatch, and Omni Hotels & Resorts, with ongoing speaking and advisory work for Premiere Advisory Group. She chairs the Global Wellness Institute's Inclusive Wellness Initiative and has spoken to audiences across four continents.

Her focus sits specifically with high-potential talent navigating advancement where the pressure to stay palatable is often highest and least discussed.

Let’s Talk About the Right Room

Jackie Roby speaks to leadership teams, all-hands audiences, and high-potential cohorts, in keynote and workshop formats, in person or virtually.

"When High Performers Go Quiet" is the recommended lead talk for most organizations. "When Everyone Agrees, Someone's Not Talking" is available as a shorter, lower-lift entry point for teams looking for a first session before a larger engagement.

Palatable, Profitable, and Dying Inside, offers bulk copies available for conference attendees or leadership cohorts.

The next step is a 30-minute conversation about your audience and what you're hoping changes because of this session.

Let’s Talk About the Audience Fit:

jackie@inspiredjourneyconsulting.com

Prefer to grab time directly? Schedule a 30-minute conversation on audience fit.