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# PSYOPS IN BUSINESS

*A Man's Field Guide to Reading People,  
Holding Ground, and Leading from Strength*

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**BRIEFING // OVERVIEW**

# Mission Brief

*The most expensive mistakes in business are never about strategy.  
They are about the person across the table that you misread.*

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I have sat across from over ten thousand men. CEOs, founders, pastors, coaches, veterans, guys running seven-figure companies and guys trying to keep the lights on. And somewhere in the first five minutes of every conversation, the same thing happens.

They tell me exactly what is costing them.

Not on purpose. Not with financial statements. They tell me with their words. The phrases they use in negotiations. The way they describe their business partner. The thing they say about their team that has nothing to do with the actual question I asked. They leak. Every single one of them.

Words are not random. They are signals. And in business, a misread signal costs money, partnerships, and years. **If you can read the signal, you can skip the loss.**

This is not a therapy manual. This is a field guide for men who lead. It will teach you to read the six invisible needs driving every person in your boardroom, on your team, and across the negotiation table. Then it will give you ten rules for holding your ground when someone runs a play on you.

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Let's go.

**SECTION 1 // THREAT PROFILES**

# The Six Players at Every Table

*He thinks he is making strategic decisions. He is making emotional decisions with strategic language on top.*

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Every person you do business with is running on one of six core needs. The need does not disappear when they put on a suit. It gets louder. Because business is high-stakes, and high stakes activate wounds faster than anything else.

Learn these six players. You will find them in every partnership, every team, every deal.

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**THREAT PROFILE // 01**

## The Significance-Driven Partner

This is the business partner who needs his name on everything. He takes credit in meetings he barely attended. He rewrites history so every win traces back to him. He is not greedy. He is *starving*.

What you miss: when he gets combative, it is rarely about the business. Something made him feel unseen. A decision made without him. His name left off an email. The response looks like a power grab. It is actually a *panic response from a man who is disappearing*.

**COST:** You lose a partner who was actually valuable, over something that had nothing to do with strategy.

**COUNTER:** Specific, unsolicited acknowledgment. Not flattery. Catch him doing something right and name it before he has to broadcast it himself.

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**THREAT PROFILE // 02**

## The Approval-Driven Employee

Says yes to everything. Delivers on sixty percent. Volunteers for projects he cannot handle. Agrees in meetings, falls apart quietly

after. He is not incompetent. He is **terrified of disappointing you.**

What you miss: his silence is not agreement. His "I've got it" is not competence. It is a man who would rather fail quietly than risk the conversation where he admits he is in over his head.

**COST: Missed deadlines, blown projects. You blame capability when the real issue is a man who never felt safe enough to say "I need help."**

**COUNTER: Build a culture where not knowing is safe. Ask "What part of this do you need support on?" instead of "Can you handle this?" The first gives him an exit. The second backs him into a corner.**

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### **THREAT PROFILE // 03**

## **The Acceptance-Driven Team Member**

Solid work. Never pushes for promotion. Never speaks up in meetings. Quietly wonders if he is really part of the inner circle. He is not disengaged. He is *waiting to be chosen*.

What you miss: he will not tell you he feels excluded. He will just start looking for a company where someone makes him feel like he belongs. You will be blindsided by the resignation.

**COST: You lose your most loyal people to competitors who simply made them feel included.**

**COUNTER: Initiated inclusion. "You're in the meeting Thursday." Not "You're welcome to join." The first is a declaration. The second leaves room for his wound to decline.**

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### **THREAT PROFILE // 04**

## **The Intelligence-Driven Advisor**

The consultant, attorney, or board member who always has to be the smartest one talking. Corrects your language. Challenges data in front of others. Frames every contribution as superior.

What you miss: he is not trying to humiliate you. He is trying to *survive*. If he is not the smartest in the room, he has no reason to be

there. Challenge his intelligence and you are *threatening his identity*.

**COST: You fire a brilliant advisor because he was "difficult" when the real issue was a wound you activated.**

**COUNTER:** Ask him a question that has nothing to do with expertise. "Forget the data for a second. What does your gut say?" That question terrifies him. It is also the door to a version of him that is actually useful to you.

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#### **THREAT PROFILE // 05**

### **The Pity-Driven Client**

Always a crisis. Payment late because of a disaster. Scope changed because life happened. Every conversation is a story about how hard things are.

What you miss: some of it is real. Some is strategy. He has learned that **suffering opens doors that accountability would close**. He gets extensions, discounts, and grace by making you feel sorry for him.

**COST: You give away margin, time, and energy to someone managing you through guilt. And you call it compassion.**

**COUNTER:** Empathy first, then standards. "I hear you. That sounds difficult. And here is what we need by Friday." Both sentences. Back to back. Do not drop the second one.

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#### **THREAT PROFILE // 06**

### **The Power-Driven Investor**

Does not yell. Does not threaten. But somehow every decision bends toward him. Frames suggestions as questions. Offers "feedback" that is actually a directive. Gives you the illusion of autonomy while systematically removing it.

What you miss: he does not trust you. Not because you are untrustworthy, but because *he does not trust anyone*. He built a career around turning that wound into a leadership style.

**COST:** You lose control of your own company by inches. You end up executing someone else's vision with your name on the building.

**COUNTER:** Trustworthy consistency. Do exactly what you said, when you said, how you said. No surprises. No creative reinterpretation. Every kept promise is a fracture in his control system.

**SECTION 2 // RULES OF ENGAGEMENT**

# The Ten Rules of Verbal Ground

*You do not win a manipulation by being smarter. You win it by refusing to play.*

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Now that you can identify the six threat profiles operating in business, you need to know how to hold your position when someone runs a play on you. These are the ten rules. Memorize them.

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**RULE 01 // Never Explain Yourself Under Pressure**

Explanation under pressure is submission. If someone is pressing you to justify a decision, they are not seeking understanding. They are seeking **compliance**.

*"That question is designed to put me in a position of justifying myself. That's not a role I'm going to take right now."*

**RULE 02 // Never Argue About Your Motives**

When someone challenges why you did something, they are pulling you into a courtroom where they are judge and jury. Your motives live inside you. Nobody else has jurisdiction.

*"The way you framed that puts me in a place of defending what kind of person I am. I'm not going to do that."*

**RULE 03 // Never Take the Bait on Character**

"Are you really that short-sighted?" is not a question. It is a *provocation*. Do not defend your identity. Redirect to specifics.

*"That's a character accusation. If you want to discuss a specific decision, I'm here."*

**RULE 04 // Never Apologize to De-escalate**

With a manipulator, a forced apology is an admission of guilt they will use against you later. **Never trade your integrity for temporary peace.**

*"I'm not going to take ownership of something I did not do. If you want to discuss what actually happened, I'm here."*

### **RULE 05 // Never Match Emotion**

The moment you match their intensity, you have left clarity and entered their arena. The person who escalated first has home field advantage.

*"I'm not going to match the intensity here. If you want to meet me where I am, I'm ready."*

### **RULE 06 // Never Accept Their Language**

Words like *disrespect, betrayal, toxic, hostile* are **frames**. Accept the frame and you are operating inside their narrative. The person who controls the language controls the negotiation.

*"Those words carry a frame. If I accept them, I'm not speaking for myself anymore."*

### **RULE 07 // Never Accept Binary Traps**

"So are you with us or not?" These are **forced dichotomies**. The counter is specificity. Manipulators cannot operate in specifics. Their power lives in generalities.

*"That's a binary question. What specifically are you looking for here?"*

### **RULE 08 // Never Win Through Logic Alone**

You have the data, the receipts, the timeline. None of it matters because **the conversation is not about facts. It is about control.**

*"If I fight this with facts, I'm missing that this isn't about facts. It's about positioning."*

### **RULE 09 // Never Argue That Feelings Are Wrong**

Their feelings are real. Your responsibility is limited to what you actually did, not how they interpreted it. That line is everything in business.

*"I'll own what I did. I'm not going to own how you feel about it. Those are two different things."*

## **RULE 10 // Never Fix Someone Mid-Conflict**

Teaching during conflict triggers humiliation. You position yourself above them. That is not de-escalation. That is *gasoline*.

*"This is not the moment to coach this. I'm holding my position."*

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## **FIELD ASSESSMENT**

- *Which of these ten rules do you break most often?*
- *In your last negotiation, did you explain yourself under pressure?*
- *Whose language are you currently accepting without questioning the frame?*
- *When was the last time you apologized just to make the tension stop?*

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## **WHAT THIS BRIEFING CANNOT GIVE YOU**

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Every leader has a dominant need running the show in his business.

He cannot see it because he is inside it.

You cannot see yours alone. That is not weakness. That is how wounds work.

**A briefing shows you the map. Coaching walks the terrain.**

**DrHinesInc.com**  
*Book a free consultation*

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**Dr. Johnathan Hines, DCC**

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