

The Science Behind Cadence

Why management intelligence compounds when the work runs in one system

Hybrid work exposed a weakness in how companies manage people. For decades, management depended on proximity: a leader could notice who was stuck, who was disengaging, who was ready for more, and who needed direct coaching because the work happened in view.

That assumption no longer holds. In distributed organizations, the signals that used to appear informally are scattered across calendars, goals tools, survey platforms, recognition feeds, HR case notes, spreadsheets, and manager memory. The work of management still happens, but the evidence is fragmented.

Cadence is built on a simple thesis: excellent management is not one behavior. It is a system of repeated behaviors: setting expectations, checking progress, coaching gaps, recognizing contribution, handling conflict fairly, listening to employees, and making talent decisions with evidence. The research behind those practices is well established. Cadence's role is to make those practices operate together in the recurring rhythm where management actually happens.

This paper explains the evidence base behind that thesis and how Cadence turns it into an operating plane for hybrid and remote-first organizations.

Scope and Availability Note

This paper is a research synthesis, not a claim that independent studies have already measured Cadence-specific customer outcomes. It explains the evidence behind management practices Cadence is designed to support and the integration thesis behind bringing those practices into one operating plane.

Cadence capabilities are at different availability stages. Core 1:1 workspace, goals/OKR tracking, recognition, Admin/HR-lane ER case management, job architecture imports/versioned role definitions, and Culture Scorecard views are live where enabled in the product. 9-box talent calibration and talent-review workflows are Preview/Roadmap capabilities and are not included in self-serve purchase paths unless a current Cadence workspace or signed order explicitly enables them. AI summaries/coaching, audio capture, ER analytics, survey workflows, role-recasting automation, predictive retention, and some cross-signal analytics should be treated as preview, controlled-release, roadmap, or dependent on customer configuration unless a current Cadence workspace explicitly shows them as available.

Where this paper says Cadence "operationalizes" a practice, it means the product is built around that management pattern. It does not mean every related workflow is generally available today, that AI replaces manager or People-team judgment, or that Cadence makes final employment decisions. The buyer-facing claim is narrower: established people-science practices become easier to repeat and inspect when the relevant signals share context.

The Management Problem Cadence Solves

Remote and hybrid work did not make management less important. It made weak management harder to hide.

Microsoft's 2022 Work Trend Index described the tension clearly: 85% of leaders said hybrid work made it harder to feel confident that employees were productive, while 87% of employees reported that they were productive.[microsoft-wti](#) Gallup's hybrid-work research points to the same operating need: when teams are distributed, managers have to be more explicit about priorities, progress, collaboration, and handoffs.[gallup-hybrid](#)

The answer is not more surveillance. Surveillance measures activity. Management requires context.

A useful management system has to help leaders answer questions like:

- Are expectations clear?
- Are 1:1s happening with enough structure to surface real work?
- Are goals current, visible, and discussed before they become a quarterly surprise?
- Is recognition timely and balanced?
- Are employee-relations issues handled with consistent process and documented follow-through?
- Are survey signals connected to action, or just reported as scores?
- Are talent decisions grounded in role expectations and evidence, or manager impression?

Cadence brings those questions into one operating plane.

The Integration Thesis

Most HR tools isolate the signal. A survey tool can show sentiment. A performance tool can show goals. A recognition tool can show praise. A case-management tool can show ER process. A 1:1 tool can show whether conversations happened.

Each signal matters. None is enough on its own.

The value compounds when the signals are connected:

Isolated signal	Connected management pattern
A 1:1 was missed.	Missed 1:1s coincide with stagnant goals and declining team sentiment.
A goal is red.	The goal has been red for three check-ins, and the manager has not documented coaching or support.
Survey sentiment declined.	Sentiment decline overlaps with recognition gaps, rising ER activity, and reduced 1:1 quality.
A recognition was sent.	Recognition patterns show whether specific teams or managers consistently under-recognize contribution.
A talent rating changed.	The change can be compared with goals, role expectations, recognition history, and calibration input.

Cadence's argument is not that software replaces management judgment. It is that judgment improves when managers and People leaders can see the pattern instead of chasing disconnected fragments.

Evidence Map

Management practice	Research foundation	How Cadence operationalizes it
Structured 1:1s and coaching	Feedback research shows that feedback can improve performance when it is specific, timely, task-relevant, and connected to action; poorly designed feedback can backfire. kluger-denisi	Cadence makes the 1:1 structured, remembered, and connected to goals, action items, role context, and coaching prompts.
Goals and performance expectations	Goal-setting theory shows that specific, challenging goals outperform vague direction when supported by commitment, ability, feedback, and manageable complexity. locke-lathamlocke-latham-2006	Cadence keeps goals visible inside the management rhythm so progress, tradeoffs, and support are discussed continuously.
Engagement and manager effectiveness	Employee engagement is associated with business-unit outcomes such as productivity, profitability, turnover, customer satisfaction, and safety. harter Gallup reports that managers account for about 70% of variance in team engagement. gallup-manager	Cadence connects engagement signal to the manager behaviors that can change it: 1:1 quality, recognition, goals, ER patterns, and follow-through.
Fair employee-relations process	Organizational justice research shows that procedural, interpersonal, informational, and outcome fairness each matter for workplace attitudes and behavior. colquitt	Cadence gives People teams and managers a documented process for cases, explanations, decisions, and follow-through.
Recognition	Recognition is most useful when it is timely, specific, authentic, and tied to meaningful contribution. gallup-recognitiongallup-q12	Cadence captures recognition as management telemetry, not just a culture feed.
Talent calibration	Structured evidence and multiple perspectives reduce the risk of purely informal talent decisions, while still requiring human judgment. kuncel	Cadence treats calibration as a disciplined human review process grounded in role expectations, performance evidence, and trend.
Job architecture	Job analysis, competency modeling, and role clarity are foundations for selection, development, performance management, and mobility. sawyeronetsiopcampion	Cadence gives managers and employees a shared reference for what the role requires and what growth looks like.
People analytics	People analytics is useful when it combines people data, HR-system data, and business context to improve evidence-based decisions. cipd-analyticstrousseau	Cadence turns fragmented signals into management patterns leaders can act on earlier.

1. Structured 1:1s and Coaching

The 1:1 is the operating rhythm of management because it is where priorities, blockers, coaching, accountability, recognition, and development become concrete.

The evidence supports the mechanism, not the ritual. Kluger and DeNisi's feedback-intervention meta-analysis found positive average effects, but also found that more than one-third of feedback interventions reduced performance.^{kluger-denisi} The lesson is precise: more feedback is not automatically better. Better feedback is task-relevant, specific, timely, and connected to action.

Cadence is designed around that distinction. The product makes the 1:1 a structured management workspace rather than a calendar habit:

- agendas are prepared before the conversation;
- prior action items and decisions carry forward;
- goals and role expectations are available in context;
- coaching and follow-through are tied to the actual work.

In a hybrid organization, this structure matters because the manager has fewer informal chances to notice drift. Cadence gives the relationship a memory.

2. Goals That Stay Alive

Goal-setting theory is one of the strongest foundations in management psychology. Locke and Latham summarized decades of evidence showing that specific, challenging goals lead to higher performance than vague "do your best" direction, when the right conditions are present: commitment, ability, feedback, and manageable task complexity.^{locke-latham}

The common failure mode is that goals become planning artifacts. They are written at the start of a quarter, reviewed near the end, and ignored in the conversations where tradeoffs are made.

Cadence connects goals to the recurring manager-employee rhythm:

- goals are visible in the context of 1:1s;
- progress can be discussed before it becomes a surprise;
- missed goals become coaching and support prompts;
- leaders can see whether managers are actually addressing performance gaps.

The point is not OKR theater. The point is operational accountability.

3. Engagement as a Signal, Not a Score

Engagement research has a strong business foundation. Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes' meta-analysis examined 7,939 business units across 36 companies and found generalizable relationships between employee satisfaction/engagement and outcomes including customer satisfaction, productivity, profit, turnover, and accidents.^{harter}

But survey scores by themselves do not manage anyone. They become useful when leaders can connect them to the behaviors and conditions employees experience locally.

Cadence links engagement signal to operating context:

- Are managers meeting with their teams consistently?
- Are goals clear?
- Is recognition happening?
- Are ER issues recurring?
- Is the manager acting on feedback or simply seeing the score?

That connection is what turns listening into management action.

4. Fair Process in Employee Relations

Employee relations is where management quality becomes visible under pressure. The relevant research is organizational justice: whether employees perceive outcomes, procedures, explanations, and interpersonal treatment as fair.

Colquitt and colleagues' meta-analysis found that different forms of justice are related but distinct, and each predicts important workplace attitudes and behaviors.^{colquitt} That matters because a fair outcome can still feel unfair if the process is opaque, the explanation is weak, or the treatment is disrespectful.

Cadence supports ER work by making process explicit:

- case history is documented;
- investigation and decision steps are tracked;
- follow-through is visible;
- recurrence and resolution patterns can be inspected;
- confidentiality boundaries are preserved.

The product does not turn ER into automation. It gives People teams and managers a more disciplined system for human decisions.

5. Recognition as Management Telemetry

Recognition is often treated as a morale feature. Cadence treats it as a management signal.

Gallup's recognition research emphasizes that effective recognition is honest, authentic, and individualized.^{gallup-recognition} Its Q12 framework also treats recognition and development as core employee needs tied to engagement.^{gallup-q12}

In isolation, a recognition feed says who was praised. Connected to the rest of the management system, recognition can show whether contribution is visible, whether certain teams are under-recognized, and whether a manager's documented interactions are balanced.

Cadence uses recognition to help leaders see patterns:

- timely praise for meaningful contribution;
- gaps in recognition by team or manager;
- imbalance between positive and negative documented interactions;
- connection between recognition, goals, and employee development.

The aim is not performative praise. It is better management attention.

6. Talent Calibration With Evidence

Talent calibration is useful when it separates current performance from future potential and forces leaders to compare evidence across teams. It is risky when it becomes a label applied through vague manager intuition.

Research on structured evidence and data combination supports more disciplined decision processes, while also making clear that structure does not remove the need for human judgment.^{kuncel} A calibration process can still reproduce bias if criteria are weak or evidence is uneven.

Cadence's point of view is that calibration should be:

- grounded in role expectations;
- informed by goals and performance evidence;
- reviewed through multiple perspectives;
- tracked over time rather than treated as destiny;
- connected to development, mobility, retention, or performance intervention.

The goal is not to make talent decisions mechanical. The goal is to make them less opaque.

7. Job Architecture as the Reference Layer

Management gets weaker when role expectations are vague. Employees cannot self-correct against an invisible job, and managers cannot coach consistently against a moving target.

Role-clarity research distinguishes goal clarity and process clarity as measurable parts of role ambiguity.^{sawyer} Job analysis and competency modeling provide the foundations for defining work, evaluating readiness, supporting development, and making employment decisions.^{onetsiopcampion}

Cadence uses job architecture as the shared reference layer:

- what the role requires;
- what good performance looks like;
- what skills and behaviors matter;
- what growth paths are available;
- what evidence should inform coaching and calibration.

This makes performance conversations less personal and more concrete. The discussion shifts from "how I feel about your work" to "what the role requires, what the evidence shows, and what support or change comes next."

8. Culture Scorecard and the Intelligence Layer

People analytics is not valuable because it creates more charts. It is valuable when it improves decisions.

CIPD defines people analytics as using people data, HR-system data, and business information to solve business problems and improve evidence-based decision-making. [cipd-analytics](#) Evidence-based management makes the same broader point: leaders should use the best available evidence instead of relying only on habit, hierarchy, or anecdotes. [rousseau](#)

Strategic HR research also supports a systems view. Jiang, Lepak, Hu, and Baer's meta-analysis examined HR systems through skill-enhancing, motivation-enhancing, and opportunity-enhancing practices and found relationships with human capital, motivation, turnover, operational outcomes, and financial outcomes. [jiang](#) The implication is straightforward: people practices often work as systems, not isolated programs.

Cadence's Culture Scorecard applies that systems view to the everyday work of management:

- 1:1 consistency and quality;
- goal progress and accountability;
- recognition patterns;
- ER activity and outcomes;
- survey signal;
- calibration and role context;
- manager-effectiveness patterns.

One signal can be noise. Connected signals can become an operating picture.

What Cadence Claims

Cadence is grounded in established management science. The evidence is strongest behind the practices Cadence operationalizes: structured feedback, specific goals, manager communication, engagement measurement, fair process, recognition, role clarity, calibration discipline, and people analytics.

Cadence's distinctive thesis is integration. The practices become more useful when they share context across the recurring manager-employee rhythm and the leadership systems around it.

That is why Cadence is not an HRIS, a survey tool, a 1:1 app, or a performance-review point solution. It is a management operating plane: the place where people leadership becomes visible, structured, coachable, and connected.

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