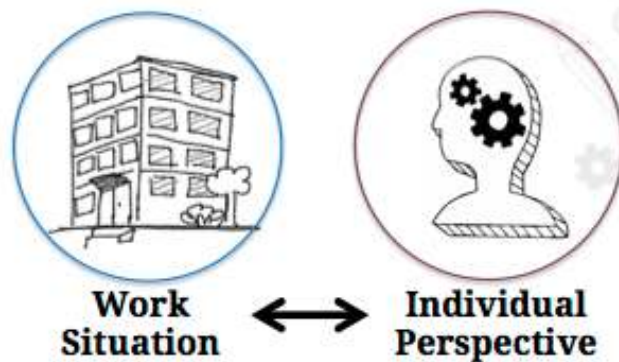


Creating a Positive Performing Workplace

As you know, positive and engaged employees are key to your company's success and bottom line. So, it's important to consider what factors are at the foundation of people's positivity at work. Two critical ones to consider are the *work situation* and employees' *individual perspectives*.

The Foundation of Our Positivity at Work



The Work Situation

Research reported by Rochester experimental psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, research summarized by author Daniel Pink in his book *Drive*, and research from Gallup, can be summarized in five main categories that impact our experience at work.

- Autonomy (feelings of control and being heard)
- Mastery (feelings of growing and using strengths)
- Purpose (feelings of alignment and meaning)
- Belonging (feelings of shared values and connection)
- Positive Work Environment (physical and psychological)

Although there are many “guaranteed” systems in books and programs that claim to have the answer to motivating employees and improving engagement, **there is no “one size fits all” formula** that works in every company or industry. Your organization is unique in its personality, goals, challenges, and people so it’s important to find what works for you. However, using the above categories as guides can make it easier to think about ways to create a culture that promotes *positive performance*.

The first step is to **understand the current situation**. What is your organization already doing well in each of these areas? What areas could use some help? It’s also important to consider the **local culture and environment** with your team, department, and/or group. According to Marcus Buckingham, “*There is no such thing as a corporate culture. Companies are made up of many cultures, the strengths and weaknesses of which are a result of local conditions.*”

Here are some questions to think about to get you started.

- *How would you describe the current culture of your organization, your team, etc.?*
- *How do you communicate and uphold your company mission and vision?*
- *How do you get people involved in making decisions that affect the company and their work?*
- *How do you make sure people understand the reasons behind company goals, rules, and policies?*
- *Are people comfortable sharing their feedback and ideas with management? IF not, why?*
- *What practices does your organization use to help people succeed?*
- *What are the top 3 reasons people like working at your organization? Which area do most of the top reasons fall into? (Autonomy, Mastery, Purpose, Belonging, Positive Environment)*

As you consider your answers to the questions above, also think about sharing them with a few select colleagues to get their feedback. Getting input from others is the best way to truly understand your company’s current work environment.

Have you identified any areas that need some attention? The section below includes different ideas listed by area to get you and your people brainstorming about what changes can be made at the company level or in your group that will be a good fit. Remember, **these are just starting points and not necessarily appropriate for your organization’s situation.**

AUTONOMY (feeling a sense of control over their work, of being heard and that their opinion matters)

- Show you value people’s input by holding strategy and/or brainstorming meetings that include all levels of people related to a specific issue (solve problems or improve processes or new ideas).
- Create a safe and comfortable environment to encourage people to share ideas with their boss or management. Examples could include open office hours or an idea box, real or virtual.
- Organize small group lunches or “walking meetings” with staff and 1 or 2 management leaders. These can easily be done online if needed.
- Encourage leaders to randomly check in with individuals 1 or 2 times per week and ask them what they’re working on or what they’re excited about.
- List people’s favorite business/personal development books in a newsletter or on an intranet.
- Create a committee including people at all levels who plan and implement strategies for addressing these five concepts.
- Have clear roles and job descriptions available so people know what’s expected for all jobs. Make sure quarterly goals are clearly defined with specific outcomes.
- As much as possible, let individuals decide how and when to get their work done.

MASTERY (feeling that they are able to use their strengths and talents and have opportunities to develop them and grow)

- Match people’s job activities with their natural abilities and skills. Use available assessments and tools to identify these abilities such as -
 - [Everything DiSC®](#)
 - Strengths Finder
 - VIA Character Strengths
 - High5 Team Strengths
- Celebrate failure/risk-taking to encourage people to try out new ideas.
- Reward people for asking questions or offering ideas – i.e. \$5 Starbucks certificates
- Cross-train people so they can help each other, learn new skills, and feel more involved.

- Recommend TED talks or show them during lunch breaks related to your industry or personal development (see TED.com).
- Provide personal and professional development training and programs internally or create awareness for external opportunities.
- Recognize people's achievements and efforts in a way that's meaningful to them. Learn about the [5 Languages of Appreciation](#) by Dr. Gary Chapman and Paul White.

PURPOSE (feeling a sense of alignment and meaning with their work and understanding why it matters)

- Encourage managers and supervisors to hold one-on-one meetings with their reports that emphasizes how their jobs support the company's purpose.
- Remind people of the value they provide to internal and/or external customers.
- Let groups of employees interview executives to ask questions – for example, What is their personal vision? What do they enjoy about their job?
- Have a clear vision and purpose for the company or group that is communicated and reinforced by management during meetings, in newsletters, emails, and/or displays. This can be the corporate vision AND a more local vision.
- When talking about someone's work or a new assignment, discuss how it fits into the company's purpose.

BELONGING (feeling a connection with the company and their coworkers)

- Have enjoyable spaces for employee breaks and lunches that they want to use and gather to talk. Encourage or even advise people on how to create a comfortable home-office space for remote workers.
- Help nurture a “connected” culture by helping people get to know each other.
 - Create a database of everyone's bio (including leadership) – where they live, kids, interests, hobbies, expertise.
 - Hold (virtual) networking lunches with small groups from different departments.
 - Organize events that are structured to help people get to know new people.
 - Share info/interests about an employee or group of the week (or month) by newsletter or posting on a board or on a video screen.

- Encourage after work events – decided by employees (not the company). These can be outside or even virtual.
- Have a favorite employee movies or books section in a newsletter or intranet site.
- Provide a welcoming environment for new employees by having an orientation that includes common acronyms, organizational structure, info on technologies and products, summary of customer or markets served, etc.
- Have a database with people’s pictures and names so everyone can refer to it to learn each other’s names and faces.
- Use personality and strengths assessments to understand and appreciate each other’s differences.
 - [Everything DiSC®](#)
 - Strengths Finder
 - VIA Character Strengths
 - High5 Team Strengths
- Incorporate teambuilding activities for teams or groups. Consider activities that help them learn about each other’s life experiences, values, past trainings, personalities, and strengths. Check out my article, [Ideas to Keep Your People Engaged and Connected While Working from Home](#) for more ideas.

POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT (both the physical and psychological surroundings)

- Start meetings by asking people to share something positive.
- Take advantage of emotional contagion by encouraging (and training) leaders to maintain a more positive perspective - the ripple effect.
- Highlight company and employee “wins” before discussing financials at company meetings.
- Encourage people to decorate their workspaces in ways that inspire and motivate them. Have people share pictures or videos of their home office areas for remote workers.
- Make sure the physical work environment and break area are comfortable, functional, and visually appealing.
- Provide sources of inspiration – surroundings, books, posters, presentations, etc.
- Ask people what changes in their work environment would make their work easier.

The best ideas will come from your people. They know the work, the challenges, and the dynamics of your organization. The ideas listed here are simply seeds to get conversations flowing. Remember, there are no bad ideas. Some suggestions that seem impossible or irrelevant can often lead to surprising possibilities.

PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVES

In addition to the work situation people experience, another major factor that influences their positivity and engagement at work is *their individual perspective*. The great news is that people can shift their perspective and this is teachable. The challenge is that many people either don't realize it's possible to be more positive or they don't know how. You can create more awareness by sharing books, websites, videos, and articles related to Positive Psychology. Contact me or see my website for ideas. You can help them understand how creating a more positive perspective can help them succeed. For more details, please refer to the article, "[Why Positivity Matters for Your Career & 7 Ways to Get More.](#)"

YOUR NOTES:

What are you already doing well in these categories?

- **Autonomy:**

- **Mastery:**

- **Purpose:**

- **Belonging:**

- **Positive Environment:**

