

Meaningful Employee Engagement

Employee Engagement has emerged as a central management practice

True

The vast majority of organizations have some kind of engagement program.



Also True

Their belief (hope) is that engaged employees will lead to better outcomes like enhanced customer satisfaction, improved financials and less turnover.



Unfortunately True

Although supported by a billion-dollar industry, results have been inconsistent at best. Why?

We have failed to leverage the core source of engagement

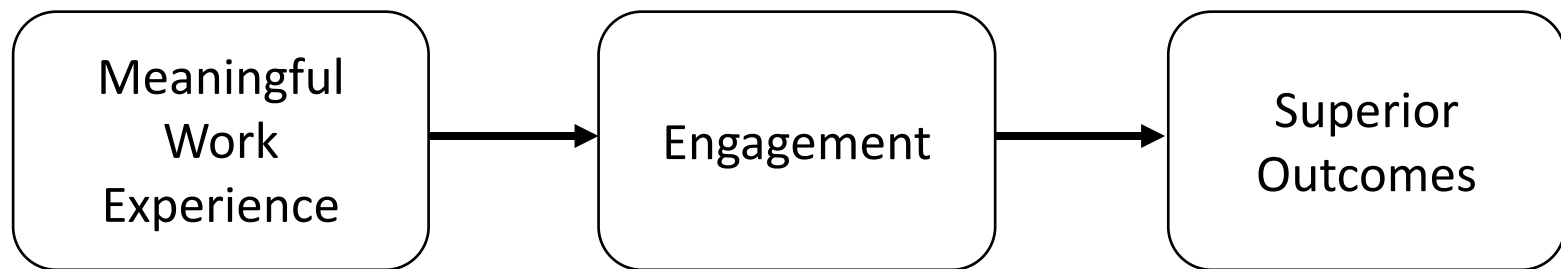
What We Believe to Be True

If you engage people in their work - they may find it to be meaningful.

The Real Truth

Help people find meaning in their work and they will be engaged.

Simply Stated: Meaning Drives Engagement



Here's the larger force we need to balance

The unforgiving market dynamics

The relentless pressures of a global market can cause organizations to lose sight of their purpose – and their guiding principles. Things like sustainability, social responsibility and stakeholder relationships can easily move to the back burner.



Under these conditions, the meaningful work experience becomes diluted and life in the organization becomes self-serving and transactional.



We need to balance these “inevitable” (not erasable) pressures with a comprehensive and meaningful engagement approach.

Why Meaning?

At first blush, the concept of meaning may seem too broad.

Our research and experience reveals the opposite. Nothing rivals the life-giving power of meaning.

We are constantly searching for it and when it is not present, work and life turns dull.

We also see it most clearly in the paradoxical nature of failure and loss and how those experiences can redirect our lives in some extraordinary ways.

In other words, meaning has the potential to transform us.

How does meaning drive engagement?

Finding meaning is central to our human experience

Increasingly it is what we seek in our work lives

It is part of the “new deal” between employer-employee

Old Deal

We offer stability & security for your hard work & loyalty

New Deal

We offer purpose & meaning for your engagement & commitment

So, what is meaningful engagement?

Our most natural and effective pathway to achieving our potential as as both individuals and an organization.

Achieved through a comprehensive development approach that puts the transformational qualities of meaning at the center of the experience.

Through meaning we systematically develop our people, culture and capacity for sustainable progress and change.

We do this by answering the four core questions we all bring into the work place:

Will I make a difference?

Do I belong?

Am I adapting?

Am I growing?

The “Meaning” Approach

Meaning is widely accessible . . .

. . . through the four core elements of a work experience

1. Individual and Team Roles
2. Work Culture
3. Performance Management Practices
4. Change Management Practices

Each area plays a special “meaning-making” role

Individual & Team Roles	Meaningful Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It brings significance to us• It makes a difference to others• We have discretion in how it is done
Work Culture	Meaning <i>at</i> Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A strong sense of purpose unites us• Our processes are continuously improving• We feel like we belong here
Performance Management Practices	Meaningful Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our performance management process is largely self-directed• We have the necessary feedback to perform at the highest levels
Change Management Practices	Meaningful Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We are fully aligned to our strategies• We work collaboratively in our change efforts (leadership at all levels)• We routinely challenge the status quo

The 4 “meaning” elements provide a more comprehensive approach to a process that is . . .

Stuck

We seem to be stuck at 1/3 of employees engaged*

Challenged

We are trying to build commitment in an increasingly low commitment world

Confused

Our engagement processes often focus on things that only indirectly influence engagement & desired outcomes

*Gallup's *State of the American Workplace*

The two essential elements of meaning are built into our process*

Purpose

Direction: An overall goal orientation that stimulates progress and brings meaning to our work.

Significance: A belief that our work makes a difference to others.

Belonging: I am accepted, included and identify with this group.

Control

Autonomy: We are increasingly “authentic” – seeking more control over our choices in life and work.

Growth: We are growing increasingly capable and competent.

Self-Direction: We set meaningful goals and proactively manage our progress toward them.

Meaningful Engagement

Meaningful Work
Meaning *at* Work
Meaningful Progress
Meaningful Change

*These elements are aligned and supported by Meaning In Life (MIL) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT).

The Four Core Needs

Answering “no” to any of these questions will crea

Meaningful Work <i>Will I make a difference?</i>
Meaning at Work <i>Do I belong?</i>
Meaningful Progress <i>Am I growing?</i>
Meaningful Change <i>Am I adapting?</i>

No?

- Answering “No” to any of these questions will create a “meaning” void
- Allowing anxiety to creep into the work experience
- Interrupting the flow of value and commitment in the workplace

Our simple formula

Meaningful Engagement =
Purpose X Control

$$ME = P \times C$$

*The “X” or multiplication sign symbolizes the synergistic effect between Purpose (P) and Control (C). It all reveals that if either P or C are low then the overall ME will be low as well.

The process of meaningful change taps into the powerful forces of intrinsic motivation

There are two kinds of motivation – intrinsic and extrinsic.

The intrinsic kind is internally fulfilling – while extrinsic motivation depends on something external like more money or a promotion. Research continues to show a weak link between external rewards and both satisfaction and performance at work.

The source of true motivation comes down to what you “want” to do vs. “have” to do.

Intrinsic motivation is also relatively “free” when compared to the cost of providing external rewards.

Not either – or

Typically, both extrinsic (external) and intrinsic (internal) motivation are at play.

For example, we may get a ton of satisfaction from volunteering but also do it for the recognition we get from others.

Or, we may enjoy competing for promotions but may not be “too disappointed” if not picked because we love the work so much.

The important thing to remember is that “meaning” is primarily delivered through intrinsic sources – things we value on their own.

We build “intrinsic motivation” into our “inquiry” process

Our caution

Unwittingly, engagement efforts can feel like a transaction between two parties to “improve” performance – missing the more powerful intrinsic motivators that unleash “new levels” of commitment and impact.

Our approach

Our carefully crafted and tested survey questions tap into the sense of purpose and control that enables a range of positive outcomes that include:

Engagement

Productivity

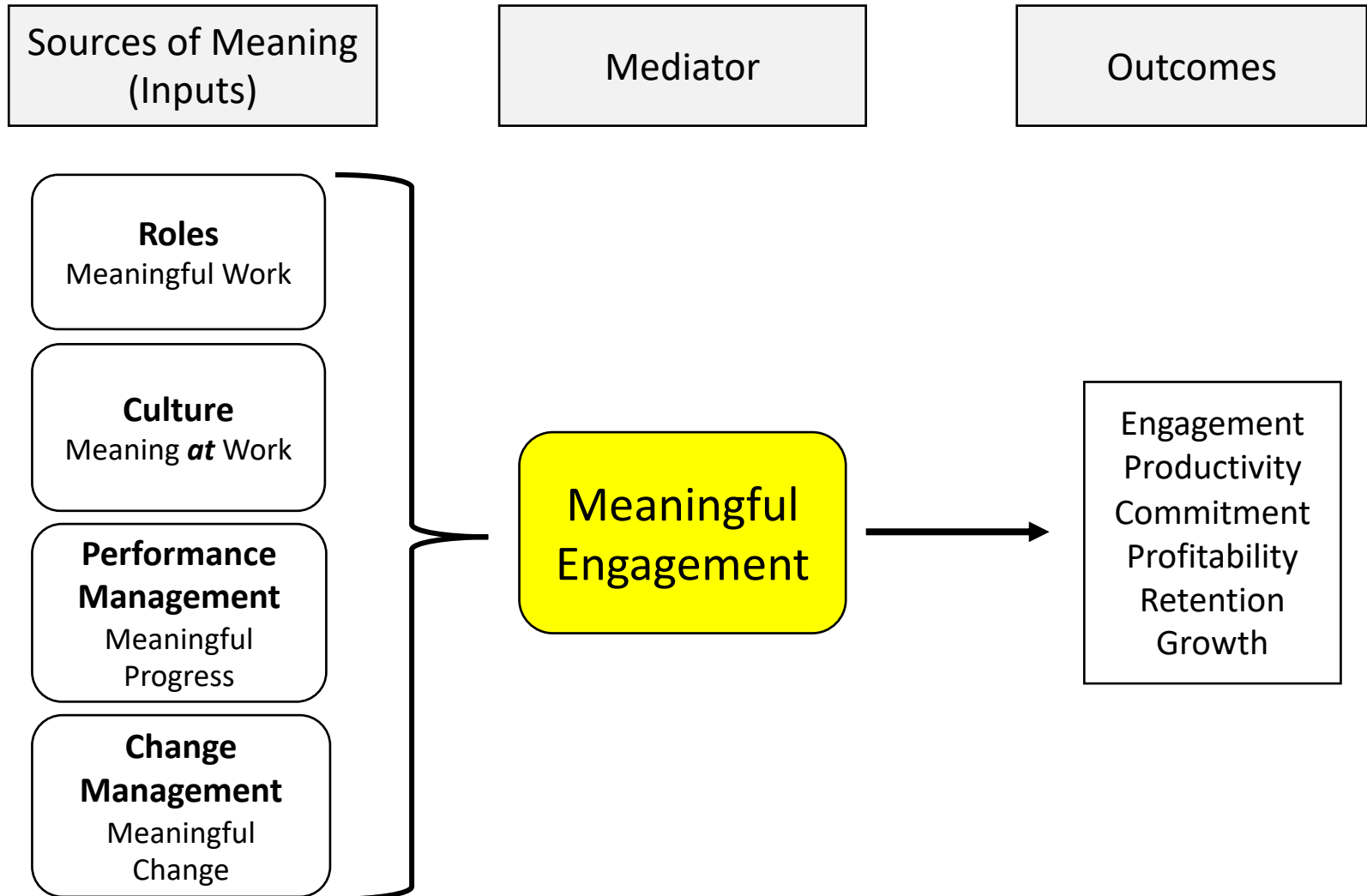
Commitment

Profitability

Retention

Growth

“Meaningful Engagement” becomes the mediating force between our work and outcomes



An “illustrative” Survey

Shortfalls in current survey processes

Problem	Description
Not often enough	In today's fast changing world, employee feedback that is received once or twice a year is simply not enough.
"It's management's problem"	Too much accountability for improvement falls on management – in a world where the single reporting relationship is disappearing.
Not comprehensive enough	The primary focus on employee-centered issues is too narrow and promotes "entitlement".
Lacks purpose & meaning	Sure, there will be a few "purpose" questions but we lack the insight to stimulate the kinds of inquiry leading to enhanced commitment and other superior outcomes.
Lacks impact	The action planning in response to survey results will often focus on easy, low-impact wins (e.g., improving the existing communication process).
Feels transactional	Too much focus on satisfaction or productivity variables that will little impact shaping the more strategic capabilities needed to compete today (e.g., do you have the tools you need, etc.).
Not safe enough	For a number of reasons, employees often do not feel safe in responding honestly to questions that might reflect poorly on their boss.

Meaningful Change Indicator (MEI)

Change Practice	Area of Inquiry (Survey Question)
Meaningful Work (Role)	My current job aligns well to who I am as a person.
	My job is a major source of meaning in my life.
	My work makes a difference to our organization.
	My work contributes to some “greater good” beyond our organization.
	I have lots of discretion in how I do my work.
	I am recognized as the “owner” of my work – the buck stops with me.
Meaning at Work (Culture)	Our work processes are continuously improving.
	My group is recognized as a high performing team.
	I would whole heartedly recommend this as a great place to work.
	My group has an unusually high level of commitment to the organization.
	It feels a little like family – I belong here.
As an organization, we would benefit from more positive work relationships.	
Meaningful Change (Leadership)	I am absolutely clear about the strategies that are guiding us to our future.
	We sometimes struggle to maintain progress on our change efforts.
	My work group always goes deeper than expected in solving problems.
	We routinely run experiments or tests that deepen our understanding of the challenges we face.
	I play a key role in challenging the status quo in my part of the organization.
	Our group has a strong reputation for innovating with others in the organization.
Performance Management (Progress)	The work of our group is not always aligned to the larger priorities of the organization.
	I continually refine and track progress on my individual goals.
	I seek the necessary feedback to perform my job at the highest levels.
	I consistently provide the kind of feedback and recognition to others that will help them perform best.
	Despite the challenges, I know how to make consistent progress in this organization.
I don't feel like I spend enough time on my own personal development.	

For more info
Contact Mike Morrison
mike_morrison@me.com