

GOALSETTING: CONNECTING “MY” GOALS TO “OUR” GOALS FOR HIGHER ENGAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

- ▲ It’s natural for employees to analyze job assignments in terms of self interest
- ▲ Leaders must help employees connect their goals to the higher purpose of the organization

What’s in It for Me?

Rarely asked out loud, that “WIFM” question frequently runs across the mind of anyone who is asked by a leader to perform a task. The standard answers often run somewhere in the range between **“Doing your job right allows you to stay here”** and **“When you do this well, you get to achieve one of your personal goals” (money, satisfaction, recognition, advancement, achievement)**. While these are acceptable motivators, in a competitive environment, “my goals” performances are simply table stakes. If these types of “WIFM” goals are the only ones operating at this level, the employee may not even be engaged. In fact, according to Gallup’s 2017 State of the American Workforce, barely 1 in 3 American workers is actively engaged. There are substantial performance gains to be obtained for those leaders who can exceed that figure.

Organizations that succeed in helping connect individual goals to organizational goals maintain a substantial competitive advantage. It’s as simple as the three laborers who were digging a series of trenches in a large field. When asked what they were there to do,

the first replied,
“Boss told me to dig a hole.”



The second answered,
“My boss said we were putting up a BIG building.”

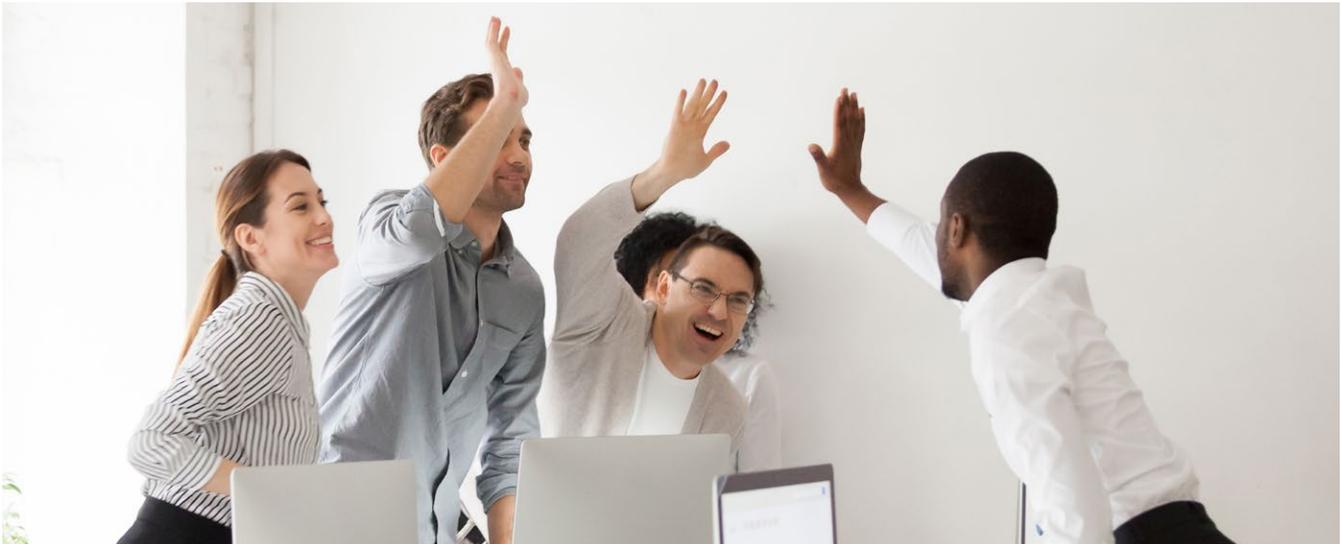


When the third laborer was asked, the answer was,
“I’ve been told that we are digging the foundation for a great cathedral that is supposed to last for hundreds of years.” It’s probably no surprise which one dug the best trench.



An Organization's Purpose

The laborers achieved their WIIFMs as they individually viewed them. Certainly, each was paid for the time spent performing the task. The workers all received resources (pay) to pursue their personal goals made possible by the work they performed. However, the vivid clarity that the third laborer's leader provided about the end result of the project helped transform the effort of the employee from a **"my" goal of a "paycheck" to an "our" goal of "purpose."**



Organizations, in an effort to increase productivity, have begun to recognize that employee well-being and engagement matter.

Unfortunately, many employers confuse satisfaction with being "happy." While free yoga at the office, catered lunches and gym reimbursements may be attractive and are possibly useful for some, they become expected and no longer viewed as extras. Consequently, the kinds of rewards and perks offered are misaligned with what generates higher performance. Employees seek fulfillment in their

jobs; they want to know that what they do at work matters. Just as we saw with the workers digging the foundation, people easily respond to doing their best work when they know they are fulfilling the purpose of the organization. **In fact, according to Gallup, 60% of employees say the ability to do what they do best in a role is "very important" to them.** Consequently, when engagement becomes an afterthought or gets confused with happiness, employees remain unfulfilled, pushing them in the wrong direction.

Connecting the Dots

Purpose provides an organization the opportunity to be clear in its mission. Clarity has solid performance advantages. In the Gallup study, six in 10 U.S. employees strongly agreed that they clearly knew what was expected of them. **By moving that ratio to eight in 10 employees, organizations could realize a 14% reduction in turnover, a 20% reduction in safety incidents and a 7% increase in productivity.**

Clarity also provides employees with a foundation for performing their tasks well. Because doing their best work is something employees seek, companies providing that opportunity obtain better outcomes. For example, four in 10 U.S. employees currently strongly agree that at work, they have the opportunity to do what they do best every day. **By moving that ratio to eight in 10 employees, organizations could realize an 8% increase in customer engagement scores, a 14% increase in profitability and a 46% reduction in safety incidents.**



Our Goals – Our Brand

Making WIIFM “our” goals has other benefits. Connecting employees to mission affirms the importance of their work, which naturally increases their engagement. In a recent blog, *Mission – Pointing a Way to True North*, I discussed the power of a clear mission and its ability to generate engagement among team members. **According to Gallup, organizations that succeed in increasing the connection of employees to mission and their sense that their work is important from an average of 4 in 10 to 8 in 10 stand to realize a 41% reduction in absenteeism, a 50% drop in patient safety incidents and a 33% improvement in quality.** With this level of engagement, employers

can feel confident that their brand is protected and that employees will deliver on their promise.

The other major benefit is that leaders can respond authentically to the WIIFM question and ensure that employees clearly understand their roles and that their contribution matters.

It is only natural that when leaders ask their people to act, that the WIIFM question will be first in the employees’ minds. When leaders succeed in linking “my goals” to “our goals”, the enterprise gains tremendous leverage in the pursuit of its goals and fulfilling its purpose.