

THE IMPORTANCE OF SMALL WINS

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Abstract: *Great achievements and progress have a significant impact on all aspects of the work and the inner life, but the big successes are rare. Moreover, the little successes in progress can have a significant impact on the inner life achievement but, unfortunately, small setbacks and small steps backward have large, even a much bigger impact than successes to emotions, motivation and perception. Every business, no matter how it is of little relevance to society and without opportunities for advancement can be meaningful if it is relevant to something or to someone very important to worker. Managers can use catalysts, instigators, and other events usual for “the best day” event, and make a positive impact on the aspects of the inner life achievement. You should make sure to remove inhibitors and toxins, and other events with a negative impact on their subordinates.*

Keywords: *progress, wins, management*

1. INTRODUCTION

It turns out that the ordinary scientists, marketers, developers and other workers, whose jobs require creative productivity every day, have more in common with famous innovators, than most managers realize. The events realized during the working day that promote their emotions, are the fuel for their motivation.

Work motivation has been the subject of extensive debate. The power of progress is fundamental to human nature, but few managers understand or know how to exploit advances to increase motivation. Since motivation tend to change and decline, and it is necessary to impact on its maintenance and renewal.¹ In a survey on key motivating employees, it was discovered that some managers ranked recognition for good work as the most important, while others are more concerned with financial incentives.² Some are focused on the value of interpersonal support, while others think that the clear goals are the answer. It is interesting that few of the surveyed managers ranked progress first.

¹ Kastratović, Edita, et al.: Methods of Motivation in Educational Institutions. *International journal of economics and law*, Vol. 2, No. 4, April 2012, ALFA University, FORKUP, Novi Sad, p. 17

² Blanding Michael 2011., Getting to Eureka! How Companies Can Promote Creativity, Harvard Business School Working Knowledge, 22.8.2011., Boston, Harvard Business School Publishing.

For managers, the principle of progress has clear implications where to focus their efforts. Knowledge of what is to encourage and foster progress, and what triggers the contrary, is the key to effective management over people and their work.

The central driver of active-productive work is the quality of the inner working life of people, a mixture of emotions, motivation, and understandings during the working day. How do happy workers feel, how are they motivated, what is their substantial interest in the work, how positive they see the organization, their management, their team, their work, themselves and all of these combinations are used or to raise them up to higher levels of achievement or to relegate them to the lower levels.

A common claim is that the high pressure and fear promote achievements. However, it was found that, at least in the domain of work, people are more creative and productive when their inner lives are positive, when they feel happy; workers motivated by their work have a positive perception of their colleagues and organizations. Moreover, in these positive institutions, people are committed to working more and they are more collegial to those around them. The inner life events may change from day to day, sometimes that can be negative performance. The inner work of people living in a given day encourages his/hers work for the day, and can even affect the performance the next day.

2. THE POWER OF SUCCESS

Quest for the challenges of the inner life led researchers Amabile and Kramer to the principles of progress.³ When they have compared the research on the best and worst day of participants (based on their overall mood, specific emotions and levels of motivation), they revealed that the most common event that triggers “the best day” was progress in the work of an individual or team. The most common event that triggers the “worst day” is a step backwards.

Take, for example, how the progress is related to one component of the inner life achievement: appraisal of the overall mood. Step forward occurred in 76% of the people with best mood these days. In contrast, the failure occurred only in 13% of the people those days.

Two other types of inner life achievement often found in the best days are catalysts - actions that directly support the operation, including assistance from individuals and groups; and instigators - events such as respect and words of encouragement. Each of them is the opposite: Inhibitors - actions that do not support or actively interfere with the work, and toxins that discourage or undermine events. While the catalysts and inhibitors are directed to the project, the instigators and the toxins are directed to individuals. As well as the failures, inhibitors and toxins are rare in the days of the great success of the internal work.

Events that are worst for the mood are almost the reflection of the best ones for the mood. Here dominate failure that occurs in 67% of “bad” days, while progress occurred in only 25% of them. Inhibitors and toxins also records generally the worst days of mood, and catalysts and instigators are rare.

³ Amabile Teresa, Kramer Steven 2011., *The Progress Principle: Using Small Wins to Ignite Joy, Engagement, and Creativity at Work*, USA, Boston, Harvard Business Review Press

This is what makes principle of progress visible: If a person is motivated and happy at the end of the working day, it is certain that he/she has made some progress. If the person is unhappy, it is likely to blame some negative event at work.

In the analysis of 12.000 daily surveys, it was found that progress and failure affecting all three aspects of the inner life achievement⁴. In the days when they made progress, participants reported positive emotions. They not only were in more optimistic mood, but also expressed more joy, warmth and pride. When they have suffered a failure, they have experienced more frustration, fear and sadness.

Motivation were also conditioned in the days of progress, the people were more motivated and essentially showed more interest and enjoyment of the work itself. In the days of failure, they were less motivated and were unsuccessful to recognize demotivation. Obvious regression can person to feel generally apathetic, and not to work at all.

Perceptions differ in many ways. In the days of progress, a lot more people see positive changes in its work. They see their teams supporting each other and report positive interpretations between the teams and their supervisors. Perception suffered when people encountered setbacks. They found less positive challenges in the work, considered to be less freedom in its implementation and report a lack of resources. On the day of the failure, the participants see their teams and their supervisors as someone who does not provide support.

These analyses established correlation, but do not prove cause. Are these changes in the inner life achievement the result of progress and setbacks, or the effect is reversed? The figures themselves cannot provide the answer to that. However, it has been proved, after reading thousands of diaries, that more positive perception, sense of accomplishment, satisfaction, happiness and even elation often accompanies progress. In addition, it is observed that the deterioration of perception, frustration, sadness, and even disgust is often followed by arrest. Almost certainly, causality runs in both directions, and managers can use this feedback loop between the progress and the inner life achievement, to support both formats.

3. PROGRESS IN THE MEANINGFUL JOB

When we think about progress, we often imagine how good we feel when we achieve long-term goal or experience a major breakthrough. These big wins are great, but relatively rare. The good news is that even small wins encourage inner life achievements⁵. Many advanced events that participants mentioned during research, represent only small steps forward. However, they often evolve into too great positive reactions.

Even a simple, incremental improvement can increase the involvement of people in the work and make them happy during the working day. Regardless of the type of event, the participants reported a significant percentage (28%) of incidents that had less impact on the project, and major influence on people's feelings about it. The inner life has a powerful effect on creativity and productivity, so even small steps forward, can be accumulated in

⁴ Amabile M. Teresa, Kramer J. Steven 2011., The power of small wins, Harvard Business Review, May 2011., USA, Boston, Harvard Business Publishing

⁵ Nobel Carmen 2011., „How Small Wins Unleash Creativity“, Harvard Business School Working Knowledge 6. 9. 2011., USA, Boston, Harvard Business School Publishing

obvious execution, advanced events that often go unnoticed, but are critical to the overall performance of the organization.

Unfortunately, on the other hand, small losses or failures can have an extremely negative impact on the inner life. In fact, studies and research by others indicate that negative events have a stronger impact than positive.⁶ Therefore, it is especially important for managers to reduce the daily difficulties. The key to motivation is to support improvement performance in meaningful work. Reaching progress improves inner life achievement, but only if people do the things for themselves (the technology performance concept - how to become successful was described in Vojislav Vučenović, Milan Radosavljevic, *"The holistic technology of success - How to become successful"*, FORKUP, 2011, pp. 73 – 76).

In 1983, Steve Jobs tried to encourage John Scillei to leave a very successful career in Pepsi Co. and become the new CEO of Apple.⁷ He allegedly asked, "Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling sugar water or do you want a chance to change the world"? In making its decision, Jobs took a powerful psychological force: a deep human desire to do the meaningful work. Fortunately, in order to feel progress, the work does not have to include placing the PCs in the hands of the common people, or the reduction of poverty, or helping to cure cancer. A work with less profound importance to society may be important in terms of its contribution to something or someone that is important to worker. The significance can be, for example, simple, useful, and high quality product to the customer or providing a real service to the community. It can be encouraging colleagues and supporting organization's profit by reducing inefficiencies in the production process. No matter if the goals are humble or lofty as long as they make sense, the workers are aware of his/hers efforts to enable them to contribute. Progress towards them can encourage inner life achievement.

Most of the work in modern organizations is potentially meaningful for the people who work on them. Nevertheless, managers can verify that employees know how their work contributes to the organization. It is important to notice that workers avoid actions inconsistent with their sense of values.

4. SUPPORTING PROGRESS: CATALYSTS AND INSTIGATORS

What managers can do to ensure that people are motivated, dedicated and happy? How can they support the daily progress of workers? They cannot use the catalysts and instigators and other types of "best day" event. Catalysts are actions that support business and progress of the project.⁸ They include setting off clear goals, allowing autonomy, provided that there are enough resources and time, they help in the work, they are open to learning about the problem and about the success, and allow the free exchange of ideas. Their opposites, the inhibitors include failure to provide active support and inconvenience. Because of their impact on the progress, the catalysts and the inhibitors affect the expression of the inner life achievement. They also have a more direct effect - When people realize

⁶ Vučenović V., Radosavljević Ž., Marković A. 2011., Samo-organizacija, Novi Sad, FORKUP, 270-271

⁷ mabile M. Teresa, Kramer J. Steven 2011., The power of small wins, Harvard Business Review, May 2011., USA, Boston, Harvard Business Publishing

⁸ mabile Teresa, Kramer Steven 2011., The Progress Principle: Using Small Wins to Ignite Joy, Engagement, and Creativity at Work, USA, Boston, Harvard Business Review Press

that they have clear objectives and meaningful work, that they have enough resources, that they are useful to their colleagues, etc. they get an instant boost of their emotions, their motivations causes great work and a positive perception of work and organization.

Instigators are part of interpersonal support, such as respect and recognition, encouragement, emotional comfort and the possibility of belonging. Toxins, their opposites, include contempt, discouragement, disregard emotions and interpersonal conflicts. For good and for bad, the instigators and toxins affect the inner working life directly and immediately.

Catalysts, instigators, and their opposites can change the meaning of the work shifting people's perceptions of their work, and even about themselves. For example, when a manager makes sure that people have the resources they need, he/she gives signals that what they do is important and valuable. When managers recognize people for the work they do, it indicates that they are important for the organization. In this way, catalysts and instigators give greater meaning to work and increase the principle of progress.

Management actions that are catalysts and instigators are not particularly mysterious; they can look as managing, not just as a kind of common sense and mutual courtesy. However, even some of better managers in companies were not able to provide the studied catalysts and instigators. Even when managers do not have a solid support, long-term strategies development and launching new initiatives can often seem more important and perhaps more attractive than taking into account that the subordinates have what they need to have a steady progress and to feel support like a human being. However, as has been repeatedly seen, even the best strategies will fail if managers ignore the people who work "in the trenches" by executing duties.

5. A MODEL OF MANAGER AND TOOLS

Approach to leadership:

1. Establishing a positive climate. One event at a time set standards of behavior for the entire team. When a customer's complaint terminates the project, for example, a team to analyze the problem is immediately engaged, without charges, and it is necessary to develop a plan for improving relations. This is a practical approach and efficient way to get a sense of moving forward, even with missteps and failures inherent in all complex projects.
2. Remain accustomed to the daily activities and the progress of the team. When the climate is created, it is naturally maintained. Team members regularly inform the manager, even though manager does not ask them about their failures, progresses, or future plans.
3. Directing support in line with recent developments in the team and the project. Every day, one can predict what kind of intervention, catalyst or inhibitor removal, instigator or an antidote has the greatest impact on internal working life and the progress of the team. If you don't know, than you should ask.

A manager should be as a resource for members of the team rather than micro-management, and must be sure to check them, but to make it not look like a check. Superficial verification and validation look quite similar, but the micro-managers make 4 types of errors. First, they fail to provide autonomy in performing tasks. Second, they often ask the employees about their work, without providing any strategic assistance. Third, micro-

managers will quickly point out a personal blame when problems arise, which leads subordinates to hide their problems, not to frankly discuss how to overcome them. Fourth, micro-managers tend to retain information that will be used as a secret weapon. Employees at lower positions realize how much damaging this is to inner life achievement. When subordinates feel that the manager has kept potentially useful information, they feel undervalued, decreasing their motivation, and their work is handicapped.

Internal meaningful life achievement leads to good performance, which depends on the consistent progress and increases the inner life. This can be called the loop of progress, which reveals the potential for self-reinforcement of benefits. Therefore, the most important implication of the principle of progress is as follows: Supporting people and their daily progress in meaningful work, the managers will not only improve the inner working life of its employees, but also long-term performance of the organization, which enhances the inner working life even more. There is a dark side, of course - the possibility of negative feedback. If managers fail to support the progress of the people who are trying to achieve it, the inner working life suffers and so the performance degrades further and undermines inner work life. Another implication of the principle of progress is that managers do not have to try to read the minds of their workers, or creating complicated incentive schemes to ensure that employees are motivated and happy. As long as they show basic respect and consideration, they can focus on supporting the work itself.

In order to become an effective, a manager must learn to adjust to this positive feedback loop in motion. This may require significant changes. Business schools, business books as well as managers, typically focusing on the management of organizations or people. However, if we focus on the progress management, people management and even the entire organization becomes much easier to achieve. We will not have to thoroughly watch the inner working lives of subordinates, as an x-ray scanner, and if we facilitated their steady progress in meaningful work, pointed out that progress and treat them well, they will experience the emotions, motivation, and understanding necessary for a great performance. Their work will then contribute to organizational success, and what is most important - they are going to love their job.

6. RESUME

Some of the tools that can help to overcome the problems are the need to establish a positive climate and standards of behavior for all members of the team, in case of the occurrence of these problems, a team should be engaged in solving problems and to respond to the crisis without panic and putting blame one to another. The manager should have sympathy for all the problems that will encourage people to be informed about all the good and bad things as well as plans. It is necessary to ensure freedom in performing work, direct support in line with the developments in the team, and managers need to know how to check the team indiscreetly.

The art of small wins is a picture of the future that we want to achieve, which is formulated in the present tense, as if that is happening in the present. Defining our creative visions include intentions of the organization and its expectations regarding future development. When we create our picture of the future, we must first think about what is most important for our organization and its underlying assumptions of existence through our creative vision. All this can be achieved by forming several important questions:

1. If our organization works in the best possible way, how that looks and how its members work?
2. How we achieve results, what kind of mutual feelings employees nurture for each other, and how they relate to performance? Let's imagine a specific event or milestone that could affect the creation of our vision for the future of the organization. For example, we may introduce a new type of service, or establish new productive relationships with significant local organization, or looking for a way to reward our organization or community for their efforts.
3. Which words we would use to describe our own perceptions of the future of our organization? Our views concerning the future vision must be formulated in the present tense, as if it's already happening.

Tactic of creating a vision indicates to possession of the necessary knowledge and skills in strategic planning. Consequently, the possibility of finding solutions means:

1. Recognition of the capabilities - requires proactive management style,
2. Opportunities are faced towards the development -economic, social, political,
3. Options live in the future, and associated risks must be encompassed into the future framework that is not always predictable,
4. Opportunities require foresight or vision of the future situation, and
5. In finding opportunities, the crucial question that arises is "What if"?

Finding opportunities and solving problems always assume knowledge or awareness of the problem and the creation of a vision of a better future. Both, awareness and vision involve many aspects, including the ability to see things (those that are not visible at first glance), creating perspective (different way of looking at problems), intuition (messages from the collective experiences stored somewhere in the human subconscious), pronounced ability of peripheral vision of the future. In addition to the fact that awareness and vision are in the domain of the human mind, they are in quantitative and qualitative terms different as the instruments available to managers when introducing changes.

Despite the similarities between the roles of change managers and strategists of vision of the future, which require a number of managerial skills and attributes, differences do exist. A change manager is much more focused on operating solving everyday problems and finding available solutions. Of course, all these activities will remain in the context of long-term implementation of planned organizational changes or community. In contrast, the vision of the strategist is much more focused on the future, and less on immediate operational tasks and duties. This means dealing with the character of the organization for five or ten years, its new value system, and achievable goals to be addressed by the management of the organization in the future.

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