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Creating a More Human Workplace Where Employees and Business Thrive

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Creating a More Human Workplace
Where Employees and Business Thrive

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FOREWORD

For many employees, the current state of the workplace is depleting, dispiriting and stressful. "Doing more with less" often means demands are exceeding capacity, draining people of the energy needed to fulfill their potential. Technology links us 24/7 to a flood of information, and Americans are spending more and more hours working with little downtime. How do we, as HR professionals, change this picture?

Research has shown that creating a more human, caring workplace ultimately leads to improved customer service, better health outcomes and all-around satisfaction. A more human workplace is one that promotes people's strengths and capabilities, leading to the high levels of engagement, productivity and retention businesses need. This new report, *Creating a More Human Workplace Where Employees and Business Thrive*, will provide you with detailed suggestions—many for little or no cost—on how to shape a culture of thriving so your organization can achieve these valuable outcomes that benefit both employees and the bottom line.

Now used in college classrooms worldwide, the SHRM Foundation's Effective Practice Guidelines series includes more than 20 titles. The series was created in 2004 for busy HR professionals. It integrates research findings with expert opinion in an easy-to-use format and provides the tools to successfully practice evidence-based management. Other recent reports include *Talent Acquisition, Leading Change,* and *Cultural Intelligence: The Essential Intelligence for the 21st Century*. To ensure the material is both practical and research-based, the reports are written by subject-matter experts and are then peer-reviewed by both academics and HR professionals.

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Thank you!

Mark Schmit, Ph.D., SHRM-SCP
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christine Porath is a professor of management at Georgetown University and founder of Cycle to Civility. Her research examines incivility and its effects. It focuses not only on the effects of bad behavior, but also on how organizations can create a more positive environment where people can thrive and how individuals and organizations benefit in terms of individual well-being and performance. In addition to her books, *Mastering Civility* and *The Cost of Bad Behavior*, her research has appeared in the *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *Harvard Business Review*, and in several other journals and books. Her work related to incivility has been featured worldwide in over 1,000 television, radio and print outlets (including *20/20*, *Time*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, NBC, CBS, ABC, FoxNews, CNN, BBC, NPR and MSNBC). Christine earned her Ph.D. in business administration from Kenan-Flagler Business School, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and her B.A. in economics from College of the Holy Cross.

Organizations that succeed put their own people first—even above customers—because they recognize that their employees are the key to creating long-term value.
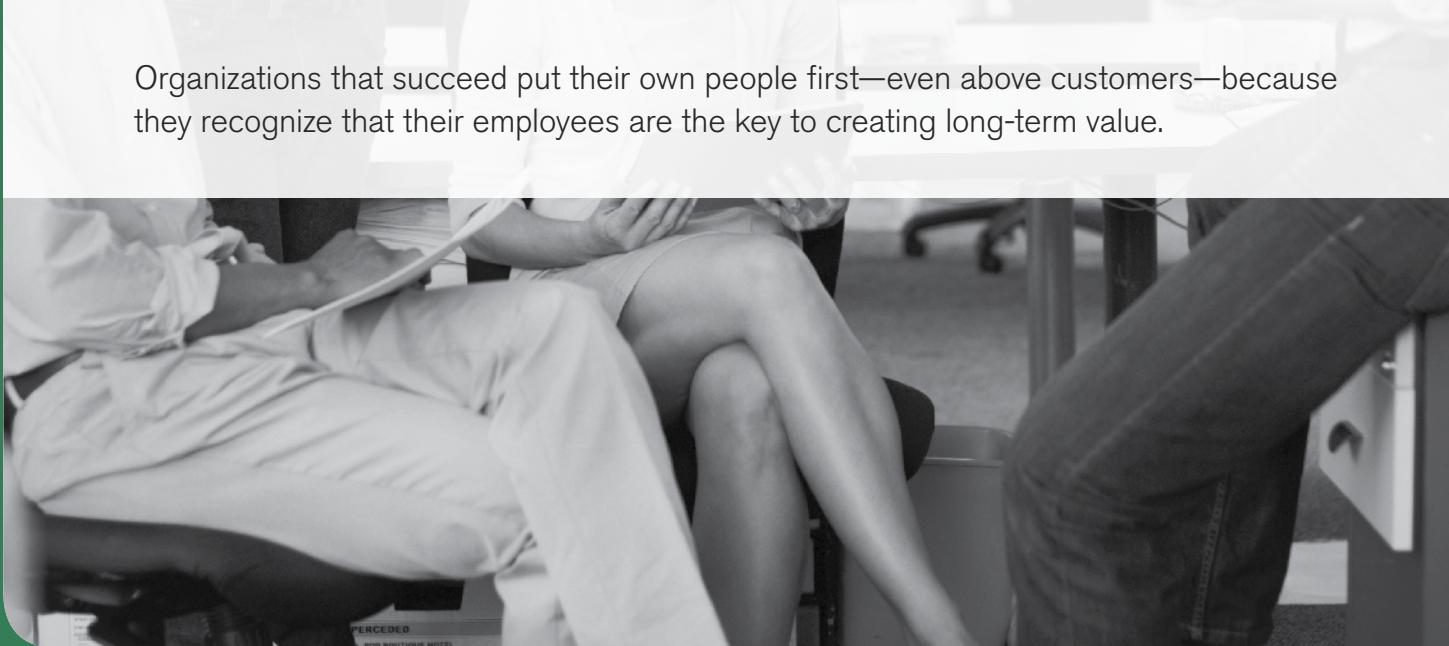
CREATING A MORE HUMAN WORKPLACE WHERE EMPLOYEES AND BUSINESS THRIVE

As human resource professionals, we understand that increasing employee engagement, productivity, satisfaction and retention is essential to any successful business. But we often struggle to achieve those diverse outcomes. This report will demonstrate that we can achieve our most valuable outcomes by focusing on one key strategy: creating a more human, caring workplace. A more human workplace is one that promotes people's strengths, capabilities and functioning, leading to the high levels of engagement, productivity, satisfaction and retention businesses need.

Many organizations fail to thrive because their employees are not thriving. To thrive, we need to experience 1) vitality, or feeling truly alive every day, and 2) learning. When they are at their best, thriving employees experience "flow," or deep immersion in an activity so that they lose awareness of time and their surroundings.[1]

The Business Case for a More Human Workplace

Organizations reap many benefits from creating more human workplaces, including better employee performance, improved safety and health, and greater worker satisfaction and commitment.[2] This finding is true across industries and applies to blue- and white-collar employees and to small and large organizations. Evidence shows that employees thrive in caring workplaces. Thriving employees are not only satisfied and productive, but are also actively engaged in shaping their own and the organization's future.[3]

A thriving workforce means greater engagement of each employee's physical, cognitive and emotional energies.[4] Engagement then spurs the employee's feelings of vitality and progress. People feel good when they are "plugged in" and connected in the workplace. Research has demonstrated that a human, caring culture ultimately leads to improved customer service, better client health outcomes and all-around satisfaction.[5]

In partnership with the Great Place to Work Institute®, *Fortune* magazine compiles an annual list of the 100 Best Companies to Work For. These 100 Best Companies have leaders who care for and listen to their employees, crafting policies and programs that help people thrive. Though perks may matter, the underlying common denominator of these firms is that they value employees. The *Fortune* list provides a strong rationale for creating an environment where people thrive, because since 1998, the companies on the list have outperformed the S&P 500 stock index by a ratio of almost two to one.[6]

Organizations that succeed put their own people first—even above customers—because they recognize that their employees are the key to creating long-term value. Thriving workers treat customers well, which improves the bottom line and benefits shareholders. In *The Good Jobs Strategy*, Zeynep Ton explained how firms in Europe and the United States win big by investing in employees.[7] These firms not only pay workers well but also provide a sense of purpose and empowerment. For example, Mercadona, a small grocery store in Spain, provides extensive employee training and benefits, leading to competent, cross-trained staff and very low turnover. Employees feel cared for; they are energized, learning and growing. The cost to train each employee is high, but it pays off for Mercadona and its customers.

Strategies That Pay Off

Research shows that the strategies, or "levers," used to create more

The Value of Sustainable Engagement

A 2012 analysis of 263 research studies covering 192 companies found that organizations with the most engaged employees outperformed those with the least engaged employees in the following ways:

- 22 percent greater profitability.
- 21 percent greater productivity.
- 65 percent lower turnover.
- 10 percent better customer ratings.
- 48 percent fewer safety incidents.
- 28 percent less theft.

When we drill deeper, however, we see that there is more than one variety of employee engagement. Another 2012 global study of 32,000 employees by consulting firm Towers Watson found that traditional engagement—defined as an emotional connection to an organization and willingness of employees to voluntarily expend extra effort—does not fuel the highest levels of performance. Instead, the study identified *sustainable engagement* as willingness to go "above and beyond" at work and to *maintain that energy over time*. In the Towers Watson study, organizations with high traditional engagement scores had an operating margin of 14 percent. In contrast, organizations with the highest number of *sustainably engaged* employees had an operating margin of 27 percent.

What is the difference between strategies employed to develop traditional versus sustainable engagement? According to the study, the chief drivers of sustainable engagement are cultural, encompassing the nature, style and quality of organizational life—in other words, the components of a human workplace.

human workplaces apply in any organization. People respond positively when they feel cared for and valued.

The retailing giant Costco pays its average worker $20.89 per hour, or about 65 percent more than Walmart, which owns Costco's biggest competitor, Sam's Club. Over time, Costco's huge investment in employees—including benefits for part-time workers—has provided a distinct advantage. Costco's employees generate nearly twice the sales of Sam's Club employees.

Costco has about 5 percent turnover among employees who stay at least a year, an overall rate far lower than Walmart's turnover rate. Reduced costs of recruiting and training new employees save Costco several hundred million dollars a year. Costco also has the lowest shrinkage rate (employee theft) in the industry.[8] Between 2003 and 2013, Costco's stock rose more than 200 percent, compared with an approximate rise of 50 percent for Walmart's.[9]

Costco's policies are indicative of a culture that values people, but there are many other ways to help employees thrive. Without heroic measures or major financial investments, leaders can jumpstart a more human workplace culture by focusing on these seven powerful strategies:

- Share information about the organization and its strategy.
- Provide decision-making discretion and autonomy.
- Create a civil culture with positive relationships.
- Value diversity and establish an inclusive atmosphere.
- Offer performance feedback.
- Provide a sense of meaning.
- Boost employee well-being.

These levers are derived from research into what factors help employees most, and taken together they account for most of the variation in how much people thrive.[10]

When organizations create more human workplaces, they and their employees stand to reap abundant benefits and to improve the work environment in each organization.

High Costs of Our Current Work Culture

For the past several decades, job satisfaction and engagement have declined in the United States. According to a survey conducted by Nielsen Company for The Conference Board in 2012, fewer than half of all employees (47 percent) are satisfied with their jobs. Since the survey began in 1987 with a 61.1 percent satisfaction level, there has been a striking and consistent decline.[11]

Other domestic and international surveys reveal the same decline. Mercer's 2012 survey of more than 30,000 employees worldwide reported that 28 percent to 56 percent of employees want to leave their jobs.[12] In fact, a mere 30 percent of employees in the United States feel engaged at work, according to a 2013 report by Gallup.[13]

Around the world the numbers of disaffected workers are even higher. Across 142 countries, just 13 percent of employees feel engaged at work, with some 24 percent actively disengaged.[14] In a 2014 global study of more than 20,000 mostly white-collar employees across a broad range of companies and industries, more than half said they feel stressed and overloaded. A mere 36 percent said they have positive energy at work.[15]

Unfortunately, the current state of the workplace is depleting, dispiriting and stressful for most people. Demands are exceeding our capacity, draining us of the energy we need to fulfill our potential. More competition and a leaner, post-recession workforce add to the stress. Technology links us 24/7 to a flood of information and requests. The time Americans spend at work has continued to increase over the past four decades, and we now work an average of 1,836 hours per year, up by 9 percent since 1979.[16]

The costs associated with our demanding work culture are enormous. The American Psychological Association estimates that workplace stress costs the U.S. economy $500 billion a year.[17] Some 550 billion workdays

are lost annually due to stress on the job, 60 percent to 80 percent of workplace accidents are attributed to stress, and more than 80 percent of doctor visits are linked to stress. Workplace stress increases voluntary turnover by nearly 50 percent.[18]

Beyond workplace stresses, a lack of employee engagement exacts a heavy toll on organizations and on our economy. Gallup estimated that poor leadership associated with active disengagement costs the U.S. economy $450 to $550 billion per year.[19] By creating more human workplaces, we can turn those losses into profits. One study that focused on businesses with 50 to 399 employees found that organizations with the most engaged employees achieve 65 percent greater share-price increases, 15 percent more employee productivity, 26 percent less employee turnover, 20 percent less absenteeism and up to 30 percent greater customer satisfaction levels.[20] These organizations also receive 100 percent more unsolicited employment applications.

Multiple Benefits of a Thriving Work Culture

When people are thriving at work, they transfer the benefits they feel to their organization and colleagues, and good things happen.

Vicki Lostetter, general manager of talent and organizational capability at Microsoft, described her experience of thriving this way:

My world was on fire. I was in a meaty, challenging job . . . learning a lot. I had a great team working for me . . . a great team around me. We had an environment of trust. We

had each other's backs. You could challenge effectively. I had a boss who gave me good feedback, but a ton of rope.

As Lostetter noted, many factors played important roles in her success. Colleagues, her leader and the organization's environment strongly shaped her ability to thrive.

Studies of more than a dozen organizations across a wide variety of industries (including health care, financial services, maritime, energy, nonprofits, manufacturing, mining and education) have demonstrated that when people are thriving at work, their job performance improves, and they become good organizational citizens, going above and beyond the call of duty. Some of the most valuable benefits that move from thriving employees to the organization are vitality, learning, good health, effective leadership and positive work/life balance.

Vitality
The first characteristic of a thriving employee is vitality, or the sense of feeling energetic and alive at work. Vitality is contagious, sparking energy and productivity in others.

Learning
Another characteristic of thriving employees is an interest in learning new information and skills. When people believe they are getting better at what they do, a cycle of growth begins and is self-perpetuating. Employees who are thriving actively seek opportunities to learn and develop, experiment with new ideas to propel their learning forward, and take initiative

in developing their careers. They also exhibit more innovative work behavior and creativity.[21]

Health
Thriving employees tend to be healthier, reporting fewer physical complaints, far fewer doctor visits and less burnout—all of which translates to lower health care costs and greater sustainability. The impact of thriving on these health outcomes exceeds the effects of other factors, including job satisfaction and organizational commitment.[22]

Effective leadership
Thriving helps increase leaders' effectiveness. In a study of executives across different industries, thriving leaders were rated 17 percent more effective than leaders who reported lower levels of thriving. Employees described thriving leaders as role models who take initiative and empower others. Such leaders' energy is contagious.[23]

Work/life balance
Those who thrive at work often thrive in their personal lives, too. The positive energy at work spills over into home life. At the same time, thriving in nonwork activities seems to build up resources that people bring to their work.[24]

Some people thrive naturally, with little outside encouragement. Organizations should seek out and recruit those people. But the majority of employees are influenced by their work environments, in which human resource professionals can have an enormous impact in creating a more caring, human workplace.[25]

In the next sections, we look more closely at the seven most effective levers to make any workplace more human and at the roles that human resource leaders can play in supporting positive workplace changes.

Thriving in the Workplace:
Benefits for White-collar and Blue-collar Employees

+16% performance
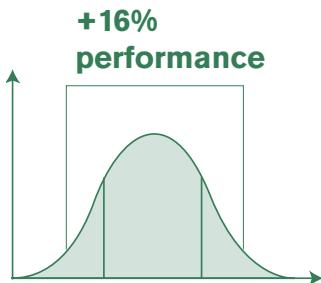
The Benefits of Thriving
(white-collar employees)

In a study of six organizations, employees just one standard deviation (less than one point on a seven-point scale) above the mean for thriving performed more than 16% better than those one standard deviation below the mean.

These employees were also:

+32% more committed **+72%** more satisfied with job **1.25x** less burned out

+27% performance
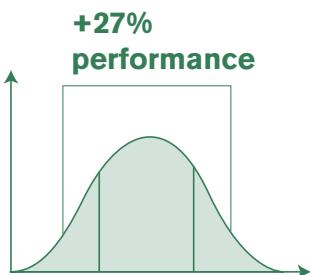
The Benefits of Thriving
(blue-collar employees)

Among a study of blue-collar employees, the differences were even more dramatic. Higher thriving employees performed 27% better than lower thriving employees.

These employees were also:

+37% better on a team **+89%** better on innovation

+39% better in a safety performance **+79%** more committed to the organization

Sources: Porath, C. L., Spreitzer, G., Gibson, C., & Garnett, F. S. (2012). Thriving in the workplace: Toward its measurement, construct validation, and theoretical refinement. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 33, 250-275; Porath, C. L. (2015). *Care: How to create an environment where employees and organizations thrive* [Working paper].
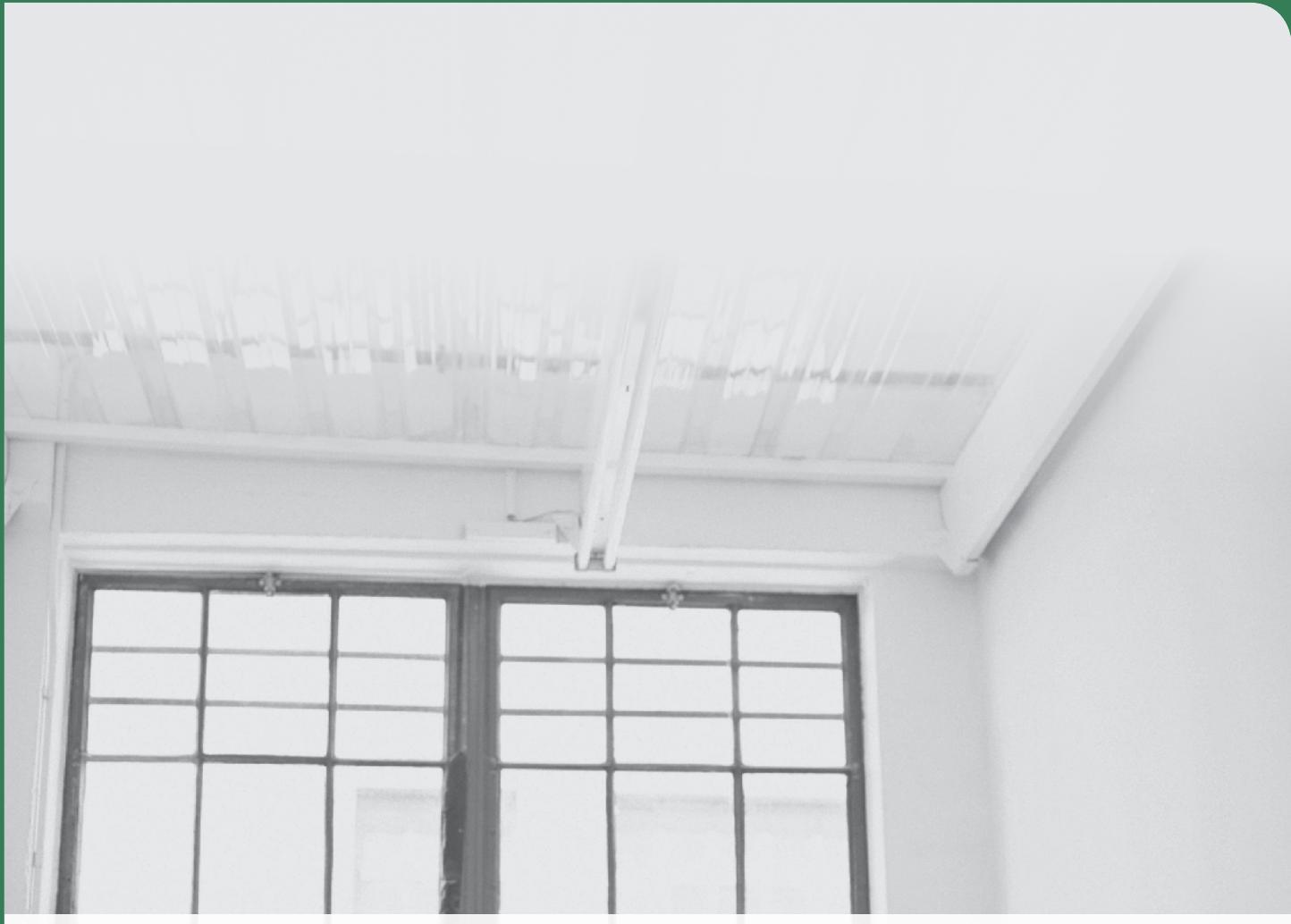
Employees who are thriving actively seek opportunities to learn and develop, experiment with new ideas to propel their learning forward, and take initiative in developing their careers.

SEVEN WAYS TO HELP EMPLOYEES THRIVE

Each strategy, or lever, suggested below provides organizations with a tool to help employees thrive, but organizations will gain the maximum benefit by using all the levers together.

1. Share Information About the Organization and Its Strategy

Organizations build energy and excitement by sharing information with employees. People contribute more effectively when they understand how their own work fits with their company's mission and strategy. Such knowledge allows workers to respond quickly to problems as they arise, make good decisions and coordinate actions across the firm.[26] Information sharing also builds trust.

Google shares company goals

Focusing on a few priorities, identifying metrics that measure progress toward those goals and quantifying the impact of progress helped Google execute its business strategies.[27] Sharing organizationwide goals has increased employees' alignment and connection to a higher purpose at the tech giant and has been key to its success.

Alaska Airlines takes its show on the road

Alaska Airlines invests significant management time in helping its employees gain a broad view of the company's strategy. The airline launched its 2010 Plan with traditional communications, a months-long road show and training classes designed to help employees share ideas.[28]

Alaska Airlines pairs its information sharing with empowering employees to take on issues proactively, sparking greater, more informed efforts to address strategic goals.

The organization's CEO, president and chief operating officer (COO) go on the road quarterly to gather information about the idiosyncrasies of various markets, then disseminate what they have learned. The trips facilitate two-way dialogues in which employees discuss what they are learning, which is then shared with other

markets to deliver superior customer service and meet other goals. The benefits of sharing information show up in annual measures of employee pride in the organization, which reach an impressive 90 percent.[29]

Zingerman's huddles for employee input

The founders of Zingerman's, a food business based in Ann Arbor, Mich., believe that informed employees show more interest and initiative if they are active in tracking the organization's key statistics. Over more than five years, the company built information sharing into its systems and routines, including "huddles," or weekly gatherings around a whiteboard at which teams track results, keep score and forecast the next week's numbers. The whiteboards include not only financials but also measures of service and food quality, check averages, and internal satisfaction figures. The organization regularly runs weekly contests for employees and seeks their input on innovation.[30]

The Zingerman's system has increased frontline employees' sense of ownership, contributing to better performance. Between 2000 and 2010, revenue grew by almost 300 percent to more than $35 million, and the company's leaders credit open book management as a key factor in that success.[31] Zingerman's is a small business, but much larger companies, including Whole Foods and Roadway Express, have followed its lead in adopting open book management.

Southwest Airlines employees know the score

Organizations have a variety of ways to keep employees informed. Southwest Airlines sends daily news updates via its intranet, and the CEO delivers a weekly telephone message to all employees.[32] The airline provides detailed information about quarterly earnings, referred to as "Knowing the Score," and holds town-hall-style meetings each year. These strategies can be implemented effectively in large or small organizations.

Information is shared at all levels

The Mighty is a digital media organization dedicated to improving the lives of people facing disease and disability. Its founder-CEO believes in transparency, so he sends all 13 employees the same e-mails he shares with investors and the board of directors. Even in industries such as machine tooling and manufacturing, sharing key information about customers and competitors can drive business results. As a result of sharing information at all levels of the organization, a large diversified firm in Australia reported substantial increases in sales.[33]

Access to strategic and financial information helps employees do their own jobs effectively and provides them with a broader, more holistic picture of the company's health.

2. Provide Decision-making Discretion and Autonomy

Successful organizations know how to energize employees by giving them the ability to make decisions that affect their work. Empowering employees in this way provides them a greater sense of control, more say in how work gets accomplished and more opportunities for learning.

The Alaska Airlines 2010 Plan

Alaska Airlines created a culture of empowerment that has contributed to a major turnaround over the past decade. It launched the 2010 Plan, which explicitly encouraged employee input into decisions that would improve service while maintaining a reputation for timely departures.

By empowering employees, firms can create a more positive, human organization and help stakeholders. In Alaska Airlines' case, employees' efforts to meet customer needs without delaying flights led to a number one rating for on-time performance and a full trophy case of awards.[34]

No micromanagers at Chick-fil-A

Chick-fil-A restaurants keep rules to a minimum and do not micromanage employees.[35] The company operates using core principles and asks people to base decisions on those principles. Company leaders ask employees "to care deeply, serve ceaselessly, and impact the lives of others." Chick-fil-A has cultivated a degree of employee commitment that has led to fantastic returns for the organization over the past six decades.[36]

The ROWE approach at The Gap Inc.

One proven way to enable autonomy is to grant employees more discretion on where or when they do their work. An extreme version of this approach is ROWE, the results-only work environment. In 2008 the Gap clothing company piloted ROWE. Determined to increase engagement, improve

work/life harmony, cater to demands for flexible schedules (important to its young workforce), and decrease time and energy spent commuting, the company decided to experiment with ROWE in one department. The results were impressive: Engagement in that department went from last in the company to second best, productivity increased by 21 percent, and turnover decreased by 50 percent. Based on these results, the Gap expanded the program, and ROWE has continued to improve work/life balance for employees.[37]

More ways to increase autonomy

Many organizations have followed the Gap's lead, and even more traditional workplaces are experimenting with small changes, such as allowing employees to work at home one day per week.

- Firehouse, a small advertising agency in Dallas, Texas, moved from a billable hours model—the industry norm—to a policy of billing per project, with no time sheets, several years ago.

- 3M and other organizations allow employees to schedule time for projects they especially want to tackle. 3M found that this encourages its workers to become more innovative.

- Google famously allows employees to spend 20 percent of their time on projects of their choosing.

Some smaller organizations provide one day a quarter when employees can collaborate to tackle projects they dream up to help the business, with great success.

Another simple way to give employees more discretion is to involve them in the hiring process. This provides people with a say in who their future teammates will be and increases the probability of eliminating candidates who will not fit the organization's work culture.

Mistakes as learning opportunities

One challenge firms face is to avoid cutting back on employee empowerment when people make mistakes. Those situations create the best conditions for learning, not only for the responsible employees but also for others, who learn vicariously. A leader who frames mistakes as knowledge to be used for learning and improvement will promote thriving and build a more trusting, safe environment for employees to experiment, take risks and innovate.[38]

3. Create a Civil Culture and Positive Relationships

Incivility, which includes disrespectful, rude or insensitive behavior, can derail people and organizations.[39] Incivility takes an emotional and physical toll on employees, and organizations pay the price in a variety of ways, from health care costs to losses stemming from poor performance, absenteeism and turnover.[40] Research suggests that even if people want to perform well, they cannot when they are operating in a disrespectful atmosphere. The productivity and creativity of those who experience or witness incivility plummet. Employees eventually lose their conviction and contribute less.[41]

On the other hand, a sensitive, respectful climate spurs positive energy and employees' eagerness to participate and contribute to the organization. Civility increases performance, creativity,[42] detection of mistakes and the initiative to take action.[43] Civility also reduces emotional exhaustion[44] and fosters psychological safety,[45] a key predictor of success for teams at companies such as Google.[46] Civility is the foundation employees need to be comfortable speaking up and sharing ideas.[47]

Build social capital through civility

Civility builds relationships[48] that help people accomplish tasks and provide personal support.[49] By being civil, employees boost their "social capital," resources that help them thrive and achieve their goals.[50] Social capital resources include knowledge, advice, contacts, emotional support and goodwill. All of these resources help employees succeed in job searches, increase promotion potential and pay, and improve organizational influence.[51]

Each small act of kindness and respect contributes to a cycle that fosters greater civility among the people in one's network.[52] Giving works the same way. Giving thanks, acknowledgement, attention and feedback is civility in its finest form.

QUICK TIPS:
Building a Culture of Givers

Givers are those who go out of their way to support and help others. They volunteer to help a co-worker with a project or to mentor a junior colleague. In *Give and Take*, Adam Grant showed how givers benefit in the long run. Offering employees the opportunity to give to one another increases their commitment to the company.

To build a culture of givers:

1. Do not insist on quid pro quo.

2. Screen out agreeable takers.

3. Regularly offer employees the opportunity to give to one another.

4. Build a culture that encourages employees to seek help when they need it.

5. Reward those who help others succeed.

Source: Grant, A. M. (2014). *Give and take: Why helping others drives our success*. New York, NY: Viking.

Foster a culture of civility

Civility is an important characteristic of any good hire, but even the best companies occasionally make bad choices, and employees from acquired organizations may bring different norms to the workplace. The key is to identify and try to correct troublesome behavior as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, most incidents of incivility go unreported, often because employees believe no action will be taken. To combat this problem, leaders must set the norms of acceptable behavior.

- Danny Meyers, the owner of 27 New York City-based restaurants, preaches civility and tolerates nothing less.[53] Bad behavior, even from an exceptional chef, must be corrected quickly, and if the behavior does not improve, the chef is let go. Meyers is convinced customers can taste incivility, and research supports his assumption. Studies demonstrate that incivility not only hurts employees, but also influences customers' willingness to do business with an organization.[54]

Make civility a mission

Organizations should communicate expectations by making civility part of their mission statements. Clear norms established by a founder, leaders or a team set the right tone and inspire a more positive human work culture. Founder and CEO of the Four Seasons, Isadore Sharp, credits the hotel chain's success to the golden rule: Treat others as you would like to be treated. He explains that basic human needs are the same around the world. The way a firm treats its employees demonstrates how it expects them to treat customers.[55]

One way to begin modeling civility is to cultivate trust and respectful engagement in onboarding employees. Employers can make sure new people get to know more seasoned employees and can encourage listening, sharing stories and contributions from everyone. These actions foster high-quality connections.

Use training to enhance civility

Training and coaching increase civility, job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and reduce turnover.[56]

- Microsoft uses courses such as Precision Questioning that aim to build emotional agility and calm, even in intense situations. Participants are taught to improve their ability to listen and respond to constructive criticism. The company views this kind of civility as crucial to innovating on a daily basis. As a result of the training, Microsoft reports greater employee, customer and partner satisfaction along with improved retention.[57]

- Hospitals now train doctors and other employees to be on the lookout for incivility. Are residents, nurses and staff avoiding particular shifts due to a toxic colleague? Are there patterns of turnover or requests to move? Such steps are useful in rooting out potential issues before they expand, especially because most employees do not report incidents of incivility on their own.[58]

Establish norms in the workplace

Simple norms can go a long way to promoting civility.

- Ochsner Health System, a large Louisiana health care provider, adopted what it calls the 10/5 Way. If employees are within 10 feet of someone, they should make eye contact and smile. Within five feet, they should say hello. Ochsner has seen greater patient satisfaction and an increase in patient referrals as a result of this simple formula.[59]

- Members of Bryan Cave, a law firm, developed norms for its Irvine, Calif., office. These norms help everyone clarify expectations, reinforce positive behaviors and hold one another accountable for civil behavior. The managing partner credits the code of civility for the firm's win as a Best Place to Work in Orange County.[60]

Code of Civility from the Bryan Cave Law Firm

1. We greet and acknowledge each other.

2. We say please and thank you.

3. We treat each other equally and with respect, no matter the conditions.

4. We acknowledge the impact of our behavior on others.

5. We welcome feedback from each other.

6. We are approachable.

7. We are direct, sensitive and honest.

8. We acknowledge the contributions of others.

9. We respect each other's time commitments.

10. We address incivility.

Use evaluations to encourage civility

Performance evaluation systems should score and reward employees who are living the organization's values.

- At Gore, a multinational enterprise specializing in high-performance fabrics, peers rank one another based on what they have done and how they have interacted with others. Compensation is based on these scores. Values at Gore are clearly defined, and people are expected to "walk the talk" every day.[61]

Civility's benefits for employers

Civility helps sustain positive relationships at work, with proven benefits. High-quality human connections are associated with physical and psychological health,[62] greater cognitive functioning,[63]

broader capacity for thinking,[64] increased learning,[65] more resiliency,[66] improved commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors,[67] and enhanced creativity.[68] Strong relationships also enable better employee coordination, marked by shared knowledge, shared goals and mutual respect, which are associated with greater organizational effectiveness and efficiency.[69]

Connecting with co-workers is simply good for employees and good for business. Research from 20,000 employees across a wide range of jobs in Sweden, Finland, Germany, Poland and Italy showed that if an employee believes that he or she lacks the ability to do the job well and feels disconnected from a manager, that employee is more likely to get sick, miss work and even suffer a heart attack.[70]

The authors of the book *Connected* explained how each of us has a much bigger impact on others than we realize. Happiness spreads not only between dyads but also between one person and that person's friends, and then their friends. If a friend of a friend of a friend becomes happier, this can positively affect someone. A person is about 15 percent more likely to be happy if someone directly connected to him or her is happy. The happiness effect for a friend of a friend of a friend is 6 percent.[71] Other research, based on professional cricket teams, revealed that teammates' happiness influences other teammates' happiness and affects team performance.[72]

By moving the happiness needle in the positive direction, employees and employers gain exponentially. The beauty is that positive connections do

not require significant time to build. Time and attention can strengthen quality, but the spread of happiness does not depend on deep, personal connections. Research revealed that frequent, superficial, face-to-face interactions are equally powerful influencers of happiness.[73] This helps explain why simple interactions like those based on the 10/5 rule are so powerful and how their benefits extend to other stakeholders, such as customers and patients.

QUICK TIPS: Strengthening Connections

1. Encourage storytelling in your organization.

2. Empower everyone to give recognition and appreciation.

3. Find a way to visualize connections among colleagues.

4. Amplify and celebrate your own culture.

5. Encourage mentoring and cross-pollination.

Source: Globoforce. (2015). *A ten-step guide to working more human: Lessons learned from WorkHuman.* Southborough, MA: Globoforce.

Don't forget to have fun!

Another way to think about community is "team spirit," and there are many ways for organizations to instill team spirit and a sense of fun in the workplace:

- Host a team-building event or activity, such as a softball or basketball game, outside the office. Caiman Consulting, a small company headquartered in Seattle, has won numerous

culture awards for its hosting of events such as Taco Tuesdays, happy hours and even an annual trip to a tropical locale. All of these events build camaraderie and a community in which employees support one another. Friendships blossom through such activities.

- Encourage employees to reach out and befriend colleagues who may feel like outsiders. Research reveals that people who have a best friend at work are seven times more likely to be positively engaged.[74]

- Host informal breakfasts or lunches. In a semi-social atmosphere, leaders can introduce a new project, get creative juices flowing, celebrate an achievement or event, or just kick off a new month.

- Provide funds for a more seasoned employee to take a new employee or someone from a different team out to coffee, breakfast or lunch. SpaceX holds Lunchtime Roulette, subsidizing lunch for five or six full-time and contract employees from different units.[75]

- The Motley Fool offers employees $10 Starbucks cards to take each other out to chat and form new relationships. CEO Tom Gardner encourages using the cards as ways to learn about others' projects, identify best practices and collaborate.[76]

4. Value Diversity and Create an Inclusive Atmosphere

A workplace climate that embraces diversity[77] contributes to thriving and promotes equality and inclusiveness.[78] Valuing diversity is really just an extension of civility, respect and trust. Research from both private- and

Connecting Through Celebrations in the Workplace: What to Celebrate?

- Cyclical events such as holiday seasons, key milestones, birthdays and company anniversaries.

- Recognition ceremonies for achieving goals.

- Special events for beating forecasts, launching a new product or strategy, or besting the competition.

- Rituals of comfort and letting go, such as for the death of a colleague or an experiment that failed.

- Personal transitions, especially entrances and exits in the organization.

- Workplace appreciation and altruism, including charity work, promoting social change, and customer and client appreciation.

- Games and sporting events that help energize meetings and conventions.

public-sector organizations indicates that a climate of respect for diversity significantly influences a range of career and organizational attitudes.[79]

Diversity adds value to the workplace

Groups that value diversity pay more attention to the different perspectives members bring, the unique information they hold and the potential contributions they make.[80]

Research has shown that diverse groups often perform better, make wiser decisions and innovate more.[81] Diversity also drives market growth.[82] In addition, diversity may be a valuable recruiting tool in landing top talent. In a recent Glassdoor survey, two-thirds of the people polled reported that diversity is important to them when evaluating companies and job offers.[83]

Diversity also brings challenges

The positive effect of workgroup diversity is often undermined by negative group relationships and processes. If people do not

expect or know how to deal with the possibly disruptive effects of diversity, its value may not be fulfilled.[84] Even when diverse members like each other, they may not respect each others' competence. Research has found this to be the case for the elderly and people with disabilities.[85] Our unconscious biases can cause inequality and low group performance.[86]

Even well-intentioned efforts may disadvantage particular groups. Unconscious biases can creep in, often through subtle attitudes or actions. Unconscious biases often affect the way we deliver feedback to some employees.[87] Research has demonstrated, for instance, that both men and women are more likely to shield women from unpleasant or embarrassing news by telling white lies.[88] The result is that women do not receive the same feedback as men and may not develop as effectively without such knowledge. Research revealed that women want honest feedback, and resentment may occur if women detect lying.[89]

An effective strategy for limiting unconscious bias is simply to take a moment to focus on similarities and common identities.[90] For example, individuals can emphasize their shared identity as parents, residents of a city, fans of a sports team or members of a community group.[91]

Tackling unconscious bias
To minimize unconscious biases and their detrimental effects, companies must increase awareness. Google, The Motley Fool and other organizations have initiated training in unconscious biases. Google's training can be viewed at its re:Work website. Google has found that employees who have completed the program are significantly more aware of bias, have a greater understanding of bias and are more motivated to overcome bias.[92] Just one month after attending the workshop, participants were more likely to perceive Google's culture as fair, objective and attuned to diversity than those in the control group.[93] At Google, employees are trained to call out any statements or actions that may be unconsciously biased to help people avoid them.[94]

Other organizations have recently started journeys toward inclusion by introducing new frameworks for behaviors.

- Expedia, a global tech company, has focused on creating greater contextual awareness. Britta Wilson, vice president of inclusion strategies, and her team have been on a world tour hosting events to promote dialogue and understanding about inclusion. The efforts are making a difference. Despite not being a part of the corporate vocabulary nine months ago, "inclusion" was

cited as the most positive attribute of Expedia in a recent employee engagement survey.

- Employees are also gleaning a better understanding of what it means to create and participate in a workplace of respect, trust and equity of access in which everyone has the opportunity to wholly engage. As a result of new learning programs, Expedia employees are now having conversations that they were not having before. Those who believe they have experienced a slight bias are more likely to engage in a productive discussion about it. Instead of letting that slight eat away at them and affect their performance, they address it.[95]

Participating in "courageous conversations"
Educational institutions around the globe have been experimenting with an approach developed by Stanford University educator and consultant Glenn Singleton called "courageous conversations about race." The approach provides a process for embracing diversity and discussing challenging issues at work. Recently, the framework has been extended to address religion and other sources of diversity, and has also been applied in noneducational work settings in a variety of industries.[96] Such programs help develop positive diversity climates and, in turn, increase thriving.[97]

Other practices that promote a positive climate include equal opportunity policies, family-friendly policies and higher representation of minorities at the top of organizations, all of which tend to decrease turnover rates for minority groups.[98]

Companies that see diversity as

a positive resource for learning have the most positive intergroup relations and group performance.[99] They watch for blind spots, challenge assumptions and make sure that leaders act as role models.

5. Offer Performance Feedback
Feedback—two-way, open, frequent and guided communication—creates opportunities for learning. Good feedback builds feelings of thriving because it helps people know where they stand in terms of their skills, competencies and performance.[100]

Positive feedback creates high-performing employees
Low-performing teams share much more negative feedback, and high-performing teams share more positive.[101] A Gallup survey found that 67 percent of employees who strongly believed their manager focused on their strengths were engaged. Only 31 percent of employees whose managers focused on weaknesses were engaged.

IBM's WorkTrends survey of over 19,000 workers revealed that the engagement level of employees who receive recognition is almost three times higher than the engagement level of those who do not.[102] Employees who receive recognition are also far less likely to quit.[103] Recognition increases happiness at work and in general[104] and is tied to culture and business results.[105]

Here are some examples of creative ways to make ongoing, constructive feedback part of the work environment:

- The Zingerman's huddle is a tool that allows almost

immediate sharing of information about individual and business performance.[106] The huddles include "code reds" and "code greens," which document customer complaints and compliments so that all employees can learn and grow from tangible feedback. Leaders record daily ups and downs on the whiteboard. Employees are expected to "own" the numbers and come up with ideas for getting back on track when they deviate from the plan.

○ Some Zingerman's sites began instituting "mini games," or short-term incentive plans—involving goals, scorecards and rewards—to fix a problem or capitalize on an opportunity.

○ The Zingerman's Roadhouse restaurant staff used the Greeter Game to track how long it took for customers to be greeted. The Greeter Game challenged the host team to greet every customer within five minutes of being seated, with a modest financial reward for 50 straight days of "success." The game inspired hosts to quickly uncover and fix holes in the service process. Service scores improved considerably over the course of a month.

○ Other Zingerman's businesses started similar games, with incentives for faster delivery, reduced knife injuries in the bakery (which would lower insurance costs) and neater kitchens.[107]

■ At The Mighty, five numbers are continually updated on its whiteboard—a focal point in the open office. Employees brainstorm ways to improve, rally to achieve goals and celebrate wins along the way. This helps keep them

focused and energized.

■ Any company can follow this example by creating a compelling scoreboard that highlights top goals and other quantifiable achievements: the current result, the target result and the deadline. Employers can encourage employees to review the scoreboard every day or every week, as appropriate. In meetings, managers can highlight progress on the goals and ask their teams to brainstorm possibilities for how to achieve priorities.[108]

Research from the Center for Creative Leadership suggests that 360-degree evaluations are more accurate and less likely to create unintended reactions from leaders when rater anonymity is ensured and confidentiality is preserved. By collecting feedback from bosses, peers, subordinates and even clients or customers, organizations obtain a fuller picture of employee strengths and weaknesses. At the same time, employees learn about the difference they make and gain a more realistic picture of improvements that will make a difference to colleagues and the organization.

Positive feelings in the workplace are contagious. Small interpersonal interactions can have a big impact on others and their motivation. Managers should take the time to notice what each employee prefers, or ask each directly. Sometimes the simplest way to generate good feelings is to ask, "How did you solve that problem or score that result?"[109] And employees should share success stories. A daily sense of progress, or small wins, can boost employees' motivation and performance.[110]

Connect recognition to the company's core values

Recognition sticks and helps create a meaningful, human environment when it clearly supports organizational values.[111] A gift or reward also makes the recognition stick.[112]

■ JetBlue's Lift program recognizes the organization's values of safety, caring, integrity, fun and passion. Employees nominate peers for awards with messages of thanks that can be accompanied by rewards (redeemable for a choice of gift cards), which are meant to create lasting memories linked to employee achievement and organizational values.[113]

Praise others freely and genuinely

Most people express gratitude at work less than once a year.[114] Offering a simple and genuine "thank you" can improve others' confidence, improve relationships, enhance others' trust and ultimately raise one's income.[115] Research has shown that it also lowers stress and makes people feel good.[116]

The more channels used for recognition, the higher the employee engagement level.[117] The following actions help managers recognize their employees:

■ Writing thank you notes (e-mails or handwritten) to subordinates for their contributions. Giving credit to subordinates, even if the leaders themselves have contributed greatly.

Get employees into the act

Peers are the most likely candidates to recognize positive behavior, but they are often underused.

- Zappos implemented a Wow recognition program designed to capture people in the act of doing the right thing. Any employee at any level who sees a colleague doing something special can award a Wow, which includes a cash bonus of up to $50. Recipients are automatically eligible for a Hero award, chosen by top executives. They receive a covered parking spot for a month, a $150 Zappos gift card and a hero's cape. Light-hearted awards such as these can serve as enduring symbols of the organization's values.[118]

- Cisco is using employee recognition software to increase peer recognition, reinforce company values, boost employee satisfaction and promote teamwork.[119] Peers nominate one another for representation of certain Cisco values such as innovation, teamwork or customer service. A manager approves the decision, distributing cash awards valued from $25 to $2,000.

QUICK TIPS:
Recognizing Outstanding Workers

1. Be specific about what they did.

2. Talk about their results.

3. Consider your words.

4. Make it individual.

5. Use their name.

6. Tell a story.

7. Don't forget to say thank you.

Source: Mosley, E., & Irvine, D. (2015). *The power of thanks.* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education.

6. Provide a Sense of Meaning

Meaningful work is a fundamental need that motivates all of us and has become U.S. employees' number one desire in a job. Doing what helps others matters to us.[120] Meaningful work increases motivation,[121] social behavior[122] and performance.[123] A study of social service employees found those who reported more meaning in their work were more likely to thrive.[124] Meaningful work encourages personal growth,[125] work engagement[126] and well-being.[127] A greater sense of purpose produces positive emotions like fulfillment and elevation[128] and attitudes like job satisfaction.[129] Having a sense of purpose may also lead individuals to be more attentive and responsive to others in doing their work.[130]

Servant leadership at Chick-fil-A

Chick-fil-A practices servant leadership. Its S.E.R.V.E.™ Model stands for:

- **S**ee and shape the future.

- **E**ngage and develop others.

- **R**einvent continuously.

- **V**alue results and relationships.

- **E**mbody the company values.

Founder Truett Cathy declared, "We are not in the chicken business. We are in the people business." Chick-fil-A sees its work culture as the soul of the organization. Its operator retention rate spanning nearly 50 years is 96 percent. The corporate staff rate is 95 percent to 97 percent. Chick-fil-A has experienced a sales increase of more than 10 percent almost every year it has been in existence. Its leaders believe that commitment breeds commitment and produces phenomenal results for employees and the organization.[131]

Enhancing meaning at The Mighty

Many employees don't see how their work makes a difference to others in their organization, customers or society. Leaders,[132] peers and customers[133] can all help reveal the positive impact to employees, but research has demonstrated that the best source of inspiration is the end user, the person who benefits from the company's products and services.[134] At The Mighty, employees circulate and post stories from readers and contributors that thank employees for providing the support, inspiration or information to help them face disease, disabilities or disorders.

Leaders can help make such vital connections to end users. For example, university call center employees got to meet directly with a student who explained how their work had helped fund a scholarship that had changed his life. As a result, the workers on average spent 142 percent more time on the phone with alumni and collected 171 percent more revenue for additional scholarships over the next month.[135]

Strategies that employers can use to help employees see how they are making a difference include:[136]

- **Meet end users.** Leaders at Medtronic, a medical device company, provide meaning to employees who have no day-to-day contact with customers, by inviting customers to annual meetings to provide testimonies about how a device saved or improved the patient's life.

- **Ask employees to share stories.** In daily 15-minute meetings, Ritz-Carlton employees exchange stories about how they have gone above and beyond the call of duty to help customers. The Mighty's

founder begins meetings by asking employees to share their best experiences at work. Years-of-service milestones are great opportunities to share positive stories and build relationships that drive commitment.[137]

- **Become a bridge.** Employers can connect end users' stories and the organization's mission or vision.

  ◦ My Saint My Hero, a company headquartered in San Pedro, Calif., creates wearable blessings to help transform lives and make the world a better place. It connects employees with women in Medjugorje, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Cambodia; Ischia, Italy; Uganda; and other communities that are empowered through meaningful work for the company. Employees are inspired by how they are helping lift women, families and local economies.

  ◦ TINYpulse, a Seattle company that measures employee engagement, asks its own employees to decide which nonprofits to help during companywide meetings. The process highlights how its product and work contributes to stronger communities.

- **Encourage job crafting.** To develop a sense of meaning and purpose, organizations can encourage employees to think about how they would change or craft their jobs differently if given a chance.[138] Employees who "job craft," whether individually or in collaboration with teammates, perform significantly better than those who do not.[139] Those who craft their jobs are also more engaged in their work and are less likely to be absent.[140] In

addition, they seem to become happier,[141] reporting more positive emotions and better mental health and well-being.[142]

Leaders can employ several strategies to facilitate job crafting:

  ◦ When employees have a deep understanding of the strategic goals of the organization, managers may boost autonomy and empower workers to take the initiative to adjust their work, particularly if it aligns with organizational goals.

  ◦ Managers can look at how employees approach each task—which tasks they focus on individually, which they collaborate on and which they delegate.

  ◦ Managers can consider whom employees work with and the skills and development they seek.

  ◦ Leaders may have to remove some barriers to job crafting or reinforce the possibilities that already exist.

  ◦ Leaders might build job crafting into development plans, asking managers to inquire about changes that employees would like to make and trying to support these desires.

  ◦ Some employees might require mentoring, training to acquire new knowledge or skills, or taking the initiative to start a project.

Strategies that *employees* can use to bring meaning to their work include:[143]

- **Talk with customers or end users.** Employees should make it a priority to see how their work affects others. If in-person

connections are not practical, this can be done through video or via Skype.

- **Actively seek feedback.** Employees can meet with managers and fellow co-workers on a regular basis to ask what they have done that has been most and least helpful and how their feedback and suggestions have been used.

- **Journal about contributions.** Employees can bring meaning to their jobs by recording in a journal how they made a difference. In a study of fundraising callers, researchers found that writing about their contributions for less than an hour per week boosted hourly calls by more than 29 percent.[144] Journaling is more beneficial once a week than once a day.[145]

- **Become an end user.** One of the most efficient and potent ways to appreciate the meaningfulness of work is to become a customer or client. At the Four Seasons Hotels, new employees are given a "familiarization stay" overnight. After being treated like royalty, they are more inclined to lavish customers with this experience.

- **Job craft.** Employees can hold job-crafting swap meets to share goals with other employees and to discover opportunities for task and relationship exchanges. Teams at Google have found that this exercise focuses their efforts in more satisfying and productive ways.[146]

7. Boost Employee Well-Being

Employee energy and well-being have four dimensions: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. The more effectively leaders and organizations support employees in meeting all these needs, the more

likely the employees are to experience engagement, loyalty, job satisfaction and positive energy at work, lowering their levels of stress.[147]

Wachovia employees participated in a four-module energy-renewal program, in which each module focused on specific strategies for strengthening one of the four dimensions of energy. Participants produced 13 percent greater revenue from loans and 20 percent greater revenue from deposits than employees in the control group who did not participate. The participants reported substantial improvements in engagement at work, relationships with customers and personal satisfaction.[148]

When employees have one core need met, all of their performance variables improve.[149] The more needs met, the more positive the impact.

Physical energy and well-being

Exercise, nutrition and sleep combine to improve people's physical energy and well-being.

- **Exercise**
  Exercise boosts brainpower and is a powerful way to reduce stress.[150] A study of 1,632 workers who exercised at least four hours a week were half as likely to suffer from depression or burnout.[151] Another study found that exercise was better than sertraline (Zoloft) in treating depression.[152] Exercise helps combat stress-related diseases, including chronic fatigue, arthritis, fibromyalgia and other autoimmune diseases.[153]

  Exercise promotes alertness, concentration and cognitive performance, so people learn more efficiently following exercise. People who exercise regularly benefit from astonishing gains in cognitive performance—memory, reasoning,

attention, problem-solving and even fluid intelligence.[154]

Organizations can encourage exercise by providing access to gyms and fitness classes, including subsidies for memberships. The key is to get people moving. The Motley Fool hired a full-time personal trainer who teaches yoga, high-intensity interval training (HIIT) workouts, Zumba and strength classes at its offices.[155] The trainer even coaches employees at global offices around the world via Skype. The company reports that this convenient solution has led to higher productivity, lower health insurance costs and greater levels of satisfaction. Part-time trainers are another option.

Leaders and employees may also want to organize workout challenges. The Mighty built an offsite event around a marathon and 10K race, offering free registration to employees. It encouraged employees to raise money for their favorite charities. Such challenges are a healthy way to build camaraderie, lose weight, tackle a fitness goal and increase meaning by raising funds for charities.

- **Nutrition**
  Promoting healthy eating is another way to improve employee well-being. Company events should provide healthy food options rather than sugary snacks and drinks. Employers can upgrade vending machines and kitchens to include healthy options and consider hiring a nutritionist to speak to employees.

- **Sleep**
  Employees today are struggling with sleep and recovery. The National Sleep Foundation reported that by the turn of the millennium, Americans were sleeping a mean of seven hours, 1.5 hours less than they did in 1960.[156] Although 95 percent of people need seven to eight hours of sleep a day, a large-scale study revealed that 29.9 percent of Americans get less than six hours.[157] Studies from Korea, Finland, Sweden and England found the problem is global.[158] A Harvard study reported that sleep deprivation costs U.S. companies $63.2 billion a year in lost productivity.[159]

  Low sleep quantity or quality has been associated with low job satisfaction,[160] poor motivation,[161] a reduction in executive functioning,[162] less innovative thinking[163] and poor task performance.[164] Sleep deprivation also causes safety lapses and work injuries.[165] Lack of sleep and poor sleep leads to absences,[166] workplace deviance,[167] difficulty with organization, impatience, cyber loafing[168] and even unethical behavior.[169]

  A lack of sleep or poor sleep quality negatively affects people's ability to interact effectively with one another.[170] People who experience a lack of sleep have trouble regulating moods and emotions.[171] They have stronger—and typically more negative—reactions to minor events.[172] Lack of sleep is linked to frustration, hostility, anxiety and low levels of joviality,[173] as well as a lack of trust[174] and interpersonally inappropriate behavior.[175] A

lack of sleep reduces emotional intelligence and civility at work.[176] Sleep deprivation has also been shown to negatively affect the relationship between leaders and employees, but sleepy people may not be aware of the negative affect on others.[177]

Organizations concerned about employees' sleep can offer more flexibility regarding where and when work is done to provide employees with greater windows for sleep, including naps. Napping rooms and pods may help.

Mental energy and well-being
Even when employees get enough sleep, taking breaks throughout the day to rejuvenate is important. Research showed that when the human brain is asked to process extraordinary amounts of data,

Genentech and Well-being

Genentech takes a holistic approach to helping employees thrive, recognizing that this will help the organization achieve more. In 2011, Genentech's career and learning team developed a Wellbeing @ Work initiative based on *Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements*, by Tom Rath and Jim Harter. Rath and Harter focused on five interdependent essential elements: career, community, finances, social life and physical health.

Genentech analyzed how the corporate environment affects each of these pillars and how the organization can support each employee and enhance well-being across all five areas. The firm rolled out a variety of resources, including:

- **Wellbeing @ Work Tool Kit:** a website with resources and tools, including a well-being assessment.
- **A Social Community:** groups in which employees share ideas and experiences.
- **A Better Way of Working:** a course focused on energy management.
- **Resilience: Finding Your Inner Strength:** a set of practical strategies to manage challenging situations by developing a healthy stress cycle, with periods of rest and recovery.
- **More Time For You©:** a course featuring time management practices to better handle e-mail and other work responsibilities from a holistic point of view aimed at work/life harmony.

As Genentech's well-being initiative gained momentum, the company developed the Wellbeing Journey, a team-based change management program designed to support leaders interested in adapting environmental conditions that influence employee well-being. This program involves creating a definition of each well-being element, analyzing the current state of well-being with the leadership team and collecting well-being assessment data from employees on the team. After analyzing the data, the team identifies areas of focus to enhance well-being. For example, it might encourage the leader to refrain from sending e-mails over the weekend, to institute walking one-on-one meetings, to initiate flexible work arrangements or to connect through local volunteer activities during Genentech Gives Back Week.

Employees involved in the Wellbeing Journey engaged in dialogue and built relationships. Results are impressive: One team that focused on well-being between 2013 and 2014 reported a 30 percent improvement in employee opinion scores related to balance between work and personal commitments. To sustain momentum, the firm also created a Team of Champions.

Genentech's well-being initiatives continue to evolve. Over the past year the company renewed its focus on physical well-being. Leaders encouraged preventive screenings through education awareness and incentives, and helped employees and their covered dependents understand their biometric numbers and overall health. Employees share personal stories about how preventive screenings helped them with early diagnoses and about more effective treatments.

Well-being is now part of the fabric of the Genentech organization, with positive results for both employees and the company.

Source: Morgado, T., & Vega, V. (2015, July). A glimpse into a wellbeing journey. *Workforce Solutions Review*, 13-14.

its ability to solve problems flexibly and creatively decreases, mistakes increase and risks are underestimated. The more hours people work beyond 40—and the more continuously they work— the worse they feel and the less engaged they are.[178] Without routines to renew mental energy, performance and health are likely to suffer.

- **Breaks during the workday**
Think in terms of sprinters and marathoners.[179] Research revealed that people get a boost in outcome for each additional break they take during the day.[180] Employees who take a break every 90 minutes report a 30 percent higher level of focus than those who take no breaks or just take one during the day. They also report a nearly 50 percent greater capacity to think creatively and a 46 percent higher level of health and well-being.

A study of 150 accountants in the middle of their firm's busy tax season offered further evidence of the value of intermittent rest. The study compared a group of accountants who alternated highly focused and uninterrupted 90-minute periods of work with 10-to-15-minute breaks in between, and a full one-hour break in the late afternoon. These employees were also permitted to leave as soon as they had accomplished a designated amount of work. When compared with a group that did not take breaks, the group of employees who took breaks had greater focus, finished more work in less time, left work earlier in the evenings and reported a much less

stressful overall experience during the busy season. Their turnover rate was far lower than that of the rest of the firm.[181]

- **Vacations**
Vacations are a valuable form of mental renewal to improve employee functioning and well-being. A study conducted by Ernst & Young showed that for each additional 10 hours of vacation employees took, their year-end performance ratings from supervisors improved by 8 percent.[182] Frequent vacationers are also significantly less likely to leave their firms. Research from over 20,000 employees across industries indicates that people and organizations benefit from more vacation, with a boost in job satisfaction, engagement, likelihood to stay with the organization, thriving at work and a reduction in stress. The best outcomes were associated with four weeks or more of vacation.[183]

These findings help explain why many organizations have introduced less stringent vacation policies. Some have devised creative ways to encourage renewal when people leave vacation days unused. The Motley Fool implemented a unique benefit—the Fool's Errand—a monthly drawing in which the winner receives two consecutive, paid, no-contact-with-work weeks off. The winner must use the prize within the month. The company reported that this reward fosters renewal and recovery, and is also a great way to test sustainability. Typically an unplanned absence is a result of something unpleasant like illness, and only then can a team learn its weaknesses. With the Fool's Errand, the organization ensures most employees are cross-trained in the event someone needs to take time off unexpectedly.[184]

Organizations should consider how they can encourage employees to take more daily breaks and vacations. They can start small by offering a random employee a day off as a reward for great work.

- **Sabbaticals, mini-sabbaticals and community days**
Another way to encourage renewal is to offer sabbaticals. Sabbatical leaves of six months or more reduce stress levels, particularly for those who fully unplug from work.[185]

Many companies are experimenting with mini-sabbaticals in which employees remove themselves from their day-to-day job roles and offer their expertise to nonprofit organizations or entrepreneurs from disadvantaged communities.

At Firehouse in Dallas, employees spend a day each year volunteering together. The first year they painted a firehouse; another year they painted and decorated a school. In Australia, where firms are required to assess and document their social, environmental and economic impact on local communities, employees who volunteer their expertise often report gains in thriving because they are learning to apply their skills in a new context. They report a sense of vitality because they are contributing to a greater good. Such programs are an example of how human sustainability can go hand in hand with environmental and economic sustainability.[186]

Emotional energy and well-being
Play builds the brain. Positive emotions broaden thinking, stimulate

creativity and improve performance. Play also stimulates the amygdala, which helps regulate emotions and executive functions, including planning, prioritizing, scheduling, anticipating, delegating, deciding and analyzing. Dr. Edward Hallowell explained that play is good for business: "In play the brain totally lights up."[187]

▪ **Question**
Ask open-ended questions rather than those with a yes/no or other specific answer. Ask questions that prompt brainstorming or reflection, such as, "What did you learn?", "What did we do well?" and "What was the best thing that happened last week?" Promote a questioning culture and attitude in which employees routinely discuss opposing ideas and viewpoints.[188]

▪ **Decorate**
Decorate the workspace with imagination. Whiteboards on the walls promote brainstorming. Include fun spots in the office. The Motley Fool designates one area for board games, Nerf balls and comfortable couches. The entire office is scattered with toys and sports equipment.

▪ **Have fun**
Enhance fun, relaxing interaction between employees. Small kitchens, a café room with comfortable seating and open office space often increase employee touch points and sharing of ideas. Plan events such as happy hours, a brown bag "lunch and learn" and outings. Host "Take Your Child to Work Day" or, as Google does, "Take Your Parents to Work Day."[189]

Carolina Made, a wholesale distributor of sportswear in North Carolina, holds a cookout for all temporary and full-time workers.

The company president puts on a goofy apron and flips burgers and hot dogs for everyone.

At its holiday party, TINYpulse employees nominate colleagues for different awards. Mimicking the Academy Awards, people speak on camera about the nominees, and they play the videos to celebrate colleagues and reaffirm company values through storytelling.

Spiritual energy and well-being
Improving spiritual energy increases the well-being and performance of employees just as attention to physical, mental and emotional well-being does.

▪ **Mindfulness and meditation**
A multidecade study spanning 15,000 participants at the University of Massachusetts Medical School indicated that meditation reduces the number of medical and psychological symptoms by more than 35 percent.[190] A great deal of research showed the benefits of mindfulness for employee health and well-being,[191] engagement,[192] performance[193] and leadership effectiveness.[194] Recent studies suggest that meditation reduces anxiety and depression, expands the ability to focus, and positively alters the structure of the brain.

By improving self-regulation and functioning,[195] mindfulness-based practices should facilitate more positive interactions between employees. One vice president at Harvard Pilgrim Health Care insurance company started a grassroots mindfulness program that employees raved about. It has blossomed to encompass the company's clients. Over 30 percent of 1,200 employees have experienced the

mindfulness practice, with growing wait lists. Participants reported feeling much more focused, energetic and productive, and less stressed and overwhelmed.[196]

General Mills introduced a Mindful Leadership program and a seven-week course. After the course, 83 percent of participants said they took time to optimize personal productivity—up from 23 percent before the course. Among senior executives who took the course, 80 percent reported positive changes in their ability to make decisions, and 89 percent reported becoming better listeners.[197]

▪ **Yoga**
Some organizations have found that mindfulness and related programs generate health benefits and cost savings. Duke University School of Medicine found that practicing one hour of yoga a week decreased stress levels in Aetna's employees by a third, which reduced health care costs by an average of $2,000 per year.[198] In 2012, Aetna reduced its health care costs by 7 percent. Its CEO credited limiting stress through meditation and yoga.[199]

Offering daily meditation in the workplace or dedicating time to individual practice is a low-risk and inexpensive option for employers.

Individual Strategies for Thriving
Research highlights the value of being continuously attuned to one's own level of vitality and learning and being mindful and diligent about making adjustments if vitality wanes. Below are seven winning strategies to increase individual thriving:[200]

Craft your job into something more meaningful

Meaning is a key renewable resource that fuels thriving.[201] Job crafting, a work redesign that makes work more fulfilling, is a helpful tool.[202]

- First, optimize your current job. Reflect on how you spend your time in the tasks and interactions at work. Think about how you can allocate time and energy differently to build a sense of control, positive identity and connection with others. Reorder tasks and interactions to better feed your sense of meaning and engagement.

- Then, adapt your work to capitalize on positive interactions. Seek positive relationships. Consider how you can mitigate or improve relations with people who energize you. "De-energizers" have four to seven times the effect of energizers, so be thoughtful about how you can adjust your work to minimize the effect of de-energizers.[203]

Look for opportunities to learn and innovate

Knowledge fuels thriving and builds feelings of competence. Look for mentors to increase your knowledge. Volunteer to help newcomers or other co-workers. Find ways to contribute to projects that are outside your daily routine. If you do not have immediate opportunities within the organization, seek leadership and learning opportunities in the community to hone skills.

Supporting Employee Well-Being When Resources Are Limited

Fortunately, most strategies for improving employees' ability to thrive require minimal financial resources. Leaders, not dollars, play the crucial role. Without the support of leaders, employees hesitate to use gyms, enrichment classes and other perks. Leaders must be role models in sustainable work practices.

Most of the recommendations in this report apply globally, across industries, and to blue- and white-collar workers. Sharing information with all employees, from line workers to C-suite executives, is a powerful lever, as is demanding respect across every layer of an organization.

Regardless of their position, most people want greater autonomy and feedback, but in some cases, there are limits to autonomy. For example, employing ROWE with shift workers is difficult, particularly in service or manufacturing settings. However, some firms are trying to shatter traditional boundaries with software that allows store workers to trade shifts and have greater flexibility.

Organizations with limited resources may find it difficult to cover gym memberships or yoga and meditation classes. They may not be able to offer sabbaticals or more flexible vacation policies, but any company can provide employees with energy management information:

- Hold lunchtime meetings about the benefits of self-care.
- Provide free tools such as the energy audit and assessment listed on page 28.
- Encourage employees to form groups that set energy management goals or tackle fitness challenges together.

Many people are more likely to achieve goals with the support of friends and colleagues, and mutual support will also improve camaraderie.

A particularly helpful resource for implementing change with few resources is Laszlo Bock's book, *Work Rules!*, especially Chapter 11, "The Best Things in Life Are Free (or Almost Free)."

Invest in relationships that energize

Positive relationships invigorate people and their sense of thriving (as well as their motivation, engagement and well-being). Social networks also enable learning, as they are the conduits for harnessing information and knowledge. To increase thriving, be mindful of building high-quality relationships with energizers, and rejuvenating or disconnecting from de-energizing relationships.

Take care of your health through energy management

People who have healthy eating habits, including drinking plenty of water, eating a nutritious breakfast and maintaining modest meal proportions; who exercise regularly, doing both cardiovascular and strength training each week; who have good sleep practices, getting seven to eight hours of sleep; and who take regular breaks to move the body and clear the mind, are more

likely to thrive. Paying attention to when you are at your best and when you struggle should be helpful in managing role overload, your mood and effectiveness.[204] The Energy Audit, listed in the "Recommended Resources" section, is one tool individuals can use to develop strategies for sustaining energy.[205]

Intermittent breaks and other renewal tactics, no matter how small, can be enormously refreshing and create positive physical energy. Scheduling daily breaks—ideally after 90 to 120 minutes—in addition to normal vacations will enhance energy and effectiveness.[206] Energy management practices, along with stress reducers such as mindfulness, meditation and yoga, help people become more civil. Taking planned time out from digital devices will help, too.

Recognize that thriving can spill over outside the office

There is no evidence that high levels of thriving at work will crowd out personal life. Research suggests a significant positive spillover in both directions: Rewarding relationships and positive energy at work bring vitality and learning to the rest of one's life, and vice versa.[207] So strive to be happy in nonwork activities.

Be grateful

Gratitude can increase happiness levels by around 25 percent.[208]

Practice kindness and giving

Make kindness and giving a habit. At the start of every day, send a short message praising someone you know.

QUICK TIPS:
Making Gratitude a Habit

- Keep a gratitude journal.

- Remember the hard times that you have experienced in the past.

- Ask yourself three questions: "What have I received from____?", "What have I given to ___?" and "What troubles and difficulty have I caused?"

- Smile, say thank you and write thank-you notes to trigger gratitude.

Source: Emmons, R. (2007). *Thanks! How practicing gratitude can make you happier*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin.

Set the Example: The Importance of Leaders

Leaders can jumpstart a culture that encourages thriving without heroic efforts or major financial investments. Modeling good practices is more important than new facilities or policies. In a study of more than 20,000 employees around the world, only 25 percent of respondents reported that their leaders model sustainable work practices.[209]

Wellness perks

Although many organizations have built fitness facilities and even nap rooms, if leaders do not use them,

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Building a More Human Workplace: A Final Checklist

Keep these powerful levers in mind as you work to create a more human workplace where employees thrive:

✓ **Share information about the organization and its strategy.** Be transparent. Keep employees up to date.

✓ **Empower employees by providing decision-making discretion and autonomy.** Strive to grant employees freedom to do their work where and when they want to do it while holding them accountable for hitting performance standards.

✓ **Create a civil culture with positive relationships.** Do not tolerate incivility—even from the powerful. Find ways to encourage connections among employees. Build community, celebrate and have fun!

✓ **Promote diversity and inclusion.** Urge employees to be accepting of those who differ from the majority. Develop a climate that promotes diversity and values the contributions it makes to the organization.

✓ **Offer performance feedback.** Encourage an open dialogue, with two-way feedback, creating opportunities for learning for employees and leaders. Check in with one another to gauge progress.

✓ **Provide a sense of meaningfulness.** Share stories or bring end users into the organization to highlight the impact your employees have made. Ask employees to share their best work experiences.

✓ **Boost well-being.** Encourage employees to exercise. Allow time for breaks. Urge them to structure work so that they take care of themselves, use vacation time or take mini-sabbaticals. Spend a day volunteering together. Provide some basic information on energy management.

Leaders Who Model Sustainable Work Practices Earn Employees' Trust
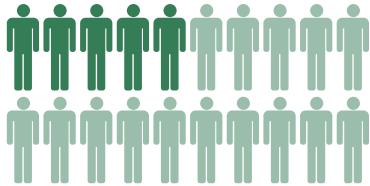
In a study of more than 20,000 employees around the world, only **25%** of survey respondents report that their leaders model **sustainable work practices**.

Those leaders' employees are:

+55% more engaged

+53% more focused

+68% greater thriving
(sense of vitality and learning)

+72% higher in health well-being

+77% more satisfied at work

1.15x more likely to stay at the company

2x Trust

Employees not only felt empowered to follow suit but also report more than twice the level of trust in their supervisors.

Source: Schwartz, T., & Porath, C. L. (2014, July 9). Your boss's work-life balance matters as much as your own. *Harvard Business Review*; Porath, C. L. (2015). *Care: How to create an environment where employees and organizations thrive* [Working paper].

employees are reluctant to use them, too. Rather than generating positive energy and renewal, these amenities may prompt anger, frustration and resentment.

Companywide habits
Leaders establish norms through their own habits and routines. For example, leaders set the tone for answering e-mail and whether it is acceptable to disengage from work after hours. If leaders typically send out e-mails in the evenings and on weekends, their employees will likely feel compelled to read and respond. Even if leaders say they do not expect responses, their actions tell a different story.[210]

- Set new e-mail norms: Managers who write e-mails at all hours should consider placing them in draft folders until working hours, and then hitting "send." Identifying which e-mails are low priority and do not need an immediate response helps employees focus on tackling high-priority items.[211]

Respect matters most
The number one thing that people want from their leaders—the thing that makes the biggest difference across organizational outcomes—is respect.[212] Leaders must create a workplace where respect and civility reign and where everyone holds each other accountable.

The better leaders take care of themselves and their people, the better their people will take care of business. The key is leader self-care and caring for others. It's important to remember that leaders have the power to fuel or drain employees' energy, value, focus and purpose by their small actions or inactions.

Leaders have the power to fuel or drain employees' energy, value, focus and purpose by their small actions or inactions.
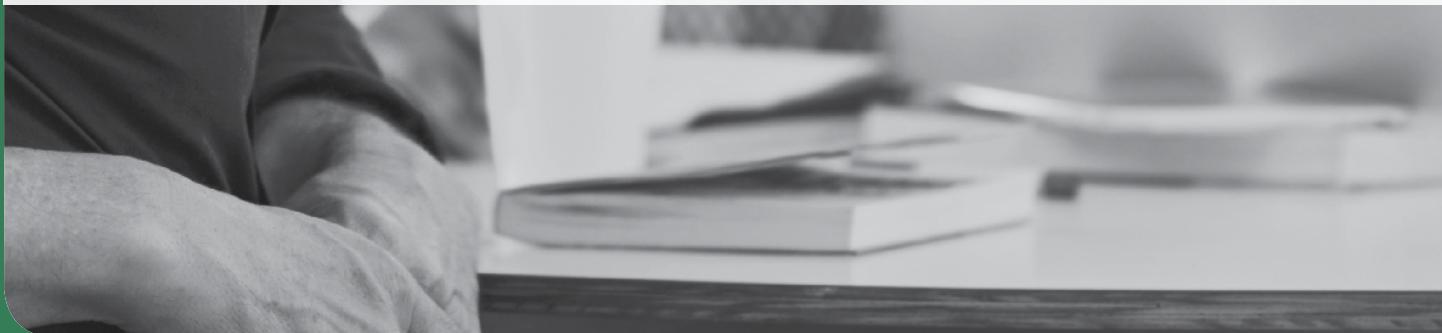
CONCLUSION

As detailed in this report, organizations have many ways to help employees thrive. Many of these strategies require few resources, whereas others are more of an investment. The key is to start. Even employees who do not lead the organization can still make it better for everyone. In fact, HR professionals are uniquely positioned to model positivity and encourage other employees to thrive. Helping people thrive at work is valuable on its own merits, but can also boost a company's performance in a sustainable way.

By creating a more human workplace that enables employee thriving, organizations can boost people's positive emotions and well-being at work. This, in turn, boosts employee performance and business results. Employee well-being feeds loyalty and attracts talent. HR professionals who focus on creating a human workplace will ultimately create wins for their organizations, shareholders and customers.

When employees have a deep understanding of the strategic goals of the organization, managers may boost autonomy and empower workers to take the initiative to adjust their work, particularly if it aligns with organizational goals.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

To improve work: Google's re:Work website: https://rework.withgoogle.com/

For research, cases of positive organizations and various tools such as the Reflected Best Self exercise: Center for Positive Organizations, http://positiveorgs.bus.umich.edu

To avoid unconscious bias: Gilrane, V. (2015, November 15). How employees and managers combat unconscious bias [Web log post]. *The Water Cooler*. https://rework.withgoogle.com/blog/employees-and-managers-can-combat-unconscious-bias/

Unconscious Bias @ Work [Video]. re:Work. https://rework.withgoogle.com/guides/unbiasing-raise-awareness/steps/watch-unconscious-bias-at-work

Bock, L. (2015). *Work Rules, Insights from Inside Google that will transform how you live and lead*. New York: Twelve.

To estimate the costs of incivility, see Chapter 3, "What could incivility cost a company? A case study" in Pearson, C., & Porath, C. (2009). *The costs of bad behavior: How incivility is damaging your business and what to do about it*. New York, NY: Pearson.

To create a more civil, positive culture: Porath, C. (in press). *Mastering civility: A manifesto for the workplace*.

To encourage civility: Take a civility assessment at http://cycletocivility.sproj.com/take-the-assessment

To manage energy effectively: Loehr, J., & Schwartz, T. (2003). *The power of full engagement: Managing energy, not time, is the key to high performance and personal renewal*. New York, NY: Free Press. See also the Human Performance Institute (https://www.jjhpi.com) and The Energy Project (http://theenergyproject.com) websites.

Take a brief energy assessment: The Energy Audit, http://theenergyproject.com/audits/individual

Consider doing an energy audit: Grant, T., & Spreitzer, G. (2012). *Energy action—awareness and action*. http://positiveorgs.bus.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/GrantSpreitzer-EnergyAudit.pdf

To boost well-being: Goldsmith, M., & Reiter, M. (2015). *Triggers: Creating behavior that lasts—Becoming the person you want to be*. New York, NY: Crown.

Huffington, A. (2014). *Thrive: The third metric to redefining success and creating a life of well-being, wisdom, and wonder*. New York, NY: Harmony.

Rath, T. (2013.) *Eat, move, sleep: How small choices lead to big changes*. New York, NY: Missionbay.

To create a culture of giving: Grant, A. (2014). *Give and take: Why helping others drives our success*. New York, NY: Viking.

To give thanks: Emmons, R. (2007). *Thanks!: How practicing gratitude can make you happier*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin.

Websites on culture:

Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org

Developing Happiness. http://deliveringhappiness.com

Best Places to Work. The Motley Fool. http://culture.fool.com

WorkHuman. http://www.workhuman.com

The way a firm treats its employees demonstrates how it expects them to treat customers.

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