

## CHAPTER FIVE

# CREATING A PERSONAL SENSE OF PURPOSE

*Beware lest you lose the substance by grasping at the shadow.*<sup>1</sup>

Aesop

*First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do.*<sup>2</sup>

Epictetus

**I**t is a shame we cannot travel back in time and observe the Greeks who occupied ancient Athens. We might spend our days walking, listening, learning and even giving speeches in the Agora—the marketplace of commerce and intellectual exchange. Philosophers and leaders like Plato, Socrates, Heraclitus or Pythagoras, were alleged to have bandied about the maxim “Know Thyself” on many an occasion. Self-understanding—knowing oneself—is essential to this. It leads us to surface a critical point. Personal purpose is the perpetual journey to continually develop, define and decide your *what*, *who* and *how*. When we ask these questions we commit to develop, define and decide our calling, our personal purpose. We pledge to begin knowing thyself.

To know oneself is to possess the passion to improve, to seize the opportunity for illustrating clarity, and to elect one’s ongoing behavior. As we progress from the teenage years to adulthood, our likes, dislikes, interests, goals and behaviors inform how we take action on various matters. Every one of us should be constantly viewing and reviewing both work and life through acts of inspection and introspection. Such factors continue to change over time. Whether or not purpose, meaning or joy ever materializes at work is, in part, subject to personal arbitration. Of course, roles, direct manager, teams and place of work can assist or detract from the journey—as we will discover in [Chapters 6](#) and [7](#)—but above all, it is an individual’s understanding and demonstration of *what*, *who* and *how* that helps determine an individual’s purpose of self. This is the importance of knowing oneself.

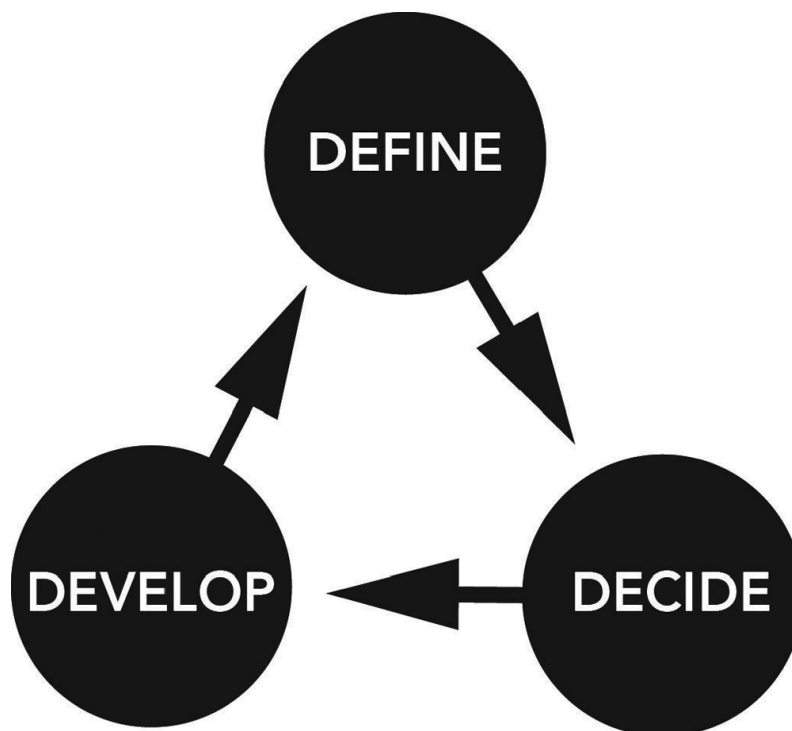
Let me introduce Megan Smith as an example. When I was working at SAP, Megan began working with our team just after she graduated from university. She was extraordinary as an individual contributor, and over time, she began to lead projects. From there, she switched business units and began leading people. After I departed to commence employment at TELUS, she switched again, and began leading leaders as an HR business partner. Throughout her time at SAP, she has continued to develop her skills, honing her experience across multiple roles. Through new opportunities, she continues to explore roles that push her growth. The key criterion for Megan is professional growth. She is uninterested in factors such as title, team size, power or corporate fame. Megan realizes that if she is not growing, her personal sense of purpose stalls or diminishes. But she is invariably her own chaperone. She has been and continues to be in control of her purpose.

Megan does not possess a traditional ladder-climbing, career mindset either. She judges her roles as opportunities for development. They are chances to learn and expand her experience. Thus, her growth, development and passion for the work are her purpose. It is what makes her tick. As she relayed to me in an interview, “I believe that doing something I love will allow me to enjoy my work and be my best professional self.” Not missing a beat, she added, “Closely linked to this, I’ve always aimed to be in a ‘career sweet spot,’ the point at which you work your hardest (because you love it) and in turn become most valuable in that area, which brings greater responsibility.” The organization Megan works for continues to provide a comfortable environment—the company, for example, continues to give back to the community in philanthropic ways, something very important to her—and in return, Megan has spent a decade developing, growing, learning and generally continuing her commitment to what she does. Not only has this benefited Megan, SAP also has gained from her personal disposition.

What sets Megan apart is how she makes it a priority to continue to explore, learn and grow, not just for the sake of doing so, but for the purpose of developing passion, excitement and personal satisfaction in her roles. She is constantly defining who she is, who she is to become and how she will operate under any circumstance thrown her way. Indeed, she is constantly building her *what*, *who* and *how* in the context of her “why.” Megan knows herself.

These qualities have become the ultimate arbiters in her life. In fact, Megan thinks people should make it their priority to love what they do, to find what they are best at and then to develop a mindset of ingenuity in order to become their best personal *and* professional self. “I see my motivators like a triangle of passion-development-reward, each in a corner and the ‘sweet spot’ firmly ensconced in the middle of the triangle,” she concluded. Because of her commitment to continuously develop, define and decide, Megan—now married with two young children while employment at SAP continues—believes she is working *and* living a life with purpose, aided in part by her mindset, roles and the organization she works for.

By virtue of working with people like Megan, conducting interviews and poring over mounds of research—as well as launching people development programs at organizational and team levels across several large firms—I have come to the realization there are three behaviors that successful and purposeful team members seem to employ. The actions—to develop, define and decide—are perpetually in motion.



## Develop

Possessing a passion for learning, growth and improvement, individuals are curious and constantly at odds with the status quo. They yearn for new

experiences, knowledge and acumen whether through roles, projects or people.

*Team members who successfully and continuously develop, answer the question: **What** am I doing to evolve myself?*

## Define

Individuals who steadily define (and redefine) what they are in life and at work seize the opportunity for clarity. Determining and adjusting their disposition, character, identity, attributes and qualities ensure they offer themselves the chance to continually reach new levels of success.

*Team members who successfully define, answer the question: **Who** am I in life and at work?*

## Decide

Every day, we have a decision to make whether under pressure or not. How am I going to act in a given situation? We must continually choose whether to operate with truth or dishonesty, with openness or intolerance, with grit or timidity, with love or hostility.

*Team members who successfully decide, answer the question: **How** will I operate and be perceived by others?*

The aim of this chapter is to delve into these three behaviors, highlighting examples of people (like Megan) who have successfully demonstrated the *what*, *who* and *how* that helps spawn their *why*. Of course, this leads to an individual's personal sense of purpose.

## Develop Your What, Like Van Gogh

Studs Terkel's classic 1974 book, *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do*, provided incredible insight into the mindset of team members at work. Through hundreds of interviews, Terkel was able to investigate individuals and their quest for meaning in their work, "Over and beyond the reward of the paycheck."

Terkel found the majority of people lacked purpose in their place of work. Whether he was spending time with a miner, farmer, receptionist, press agent, publisher, truck driver, therapist or plant manager, individuals revealed with honest candor a genuine lack of meaning in the positions where they were being remunerated. One interesting response came from Nora Watson, a writer for a company that published health care literature. Watson replied to a Terkel question as follows:

Jobs are not big enough for people. It's not just the assembly line worker whose job is too small for his spirit, you know? A job like mine, if you really put your spirit into it, you would sabotage immediately. So you absent your spirit from it. My mind has been so divorced from my job, except as a source of income, it's really absurd. You throw yourself into things because you feel that important questions—self-discipline, goals, a meaning of your life—are carried out in your work. You want it to be a million things that it's not and you want to give it a million parts of yourself that nobody else wants there. So you end up wrecking the curve or else settling down and conforming.<sup>3</sup>

Did Watson possess a passion for learning and growth or a commitment to improve? Was her apathy a result of the organization, her role or perhaps a failure to evolve?

Perhaps we might seek wisdom from the painter Vincent van Gogh. When van Gogh was starting out as a painter, particularly between 1886 and 1888 while based in Paris, he would actually reuse his painting canvases. Today, van Gogh is revered as one of the world's finest painters. But things were a little different in the 19th century. He would often reuse his canvases, adding a layer of white paint on top of an original painting before starting over on a different subject entirely. This layering could happen several times in fact. To him, he was merely continuing to master his craft. To us, (well at least to me), he was painting over brilliance. Unable to pay for new canvases, he did not stop developing, and instead improvised so that he might continue building his skills and talent.

As team members contemplate what they are doing to evolve their character, no canvas should ever be thought of as complete. Each painting can build upon itself. To disregard developing is to never paint at all. To

resist adding new layers to one's canvas is throwing a wet towel of apathy or timidity over the paint set, much like Nora Watson confessed to Studs Terkel. It reminds me of someone else, Céline, who continually chooses to paint over her personal canvas of purpose and overall growth in life.

Over her first 10 years of employment, Céline Schillinger worked for different companies in France, Vietnam and China, holding roles in communications, consulting and sales, as well as general management. She bounced between industries, too, including military defense, radio and media entertainment. In 2001, when she landed a position back in France at Sanofi Pasteur—the world's largest company to produce vaccines—her job-hopping continued, all the while remaining employed at Sanofi Pasteur. Céline to date has occupied positions in human resources, product development and stakeholder engagement before moving to Boston in 2015 to focus on quality innovation. “I would define myself as a person under construction,” she said to me. “I’m always trying to enrich my experience by adding bits and pieces wherever I go. I experiment in my roles, push for uncomfortableness to eventually gain new knowledge out of each situation.” Céline’s background is another of continuous development in the pursuit of self-based purpose.

During an interview with me, Céline raised an important point about one's personal sense of purpose. Perhaps our mindset must return to the middle ages where the path to purpose was fueled by the concept of generalism. She calls herself a generalist because she believes “generalism is humanism.” This depiction of humanism is how Céline sees the world, and it helps her hone her personal definition of meaning. It is what makes her grow. It is what fuels her purpose. The opportunities to learn, the diversity of people she works with, the connections she makes and the layers of gained knowledge and experience all contribute to her personal purpose. But not everyone agrees with this model—including some of the leaders at Sanofi Pasteur.

“It has been difficult at times, living and working without specialization,” Céline candidly divulged. “There were lots of times I didn’t feel I was good enough. People thought of my generalist background as a weakness. Generalists are frowned upon.” When I asked her to provide an example of how this type of thinking affected her, she recalled a mentoring exchange. “Five years ago,” she said, “I tried to explain to a top leader in the company that my purpose is to create bridges between people because I can

understand what they're going through. He looked at me with a crazy look, but I insisted because this is who I am. Needless to say, our mentoring sessions ended. He didn't believe being a generalist was a good career move."

If there is one thing that is markedly poignant with Céline's insistence on a working life of continuous development—of painting over her canvases—it is her perseverance, grit and gumption. Recognizing that her organization possessed a significant gender imbalance—where the majority of senior roles were occupied by men and the majority of promotions were awarded to men—Céline wrote a letter to the CEO in January of 2011. In it, she described the problem and identified 13 ways in which to remedy the situation. The letter went viral throughout the organization, and Céline also scored a lunch with the CEO. Next she was seen launching a gender balance community to support the conversation for change. The group swelled to over 2,500 members in under two years. Later Céline, while only in her 40s, became the recipient of multiple external and international awards.

During the conversation with the CEO, Céline expressed her feelings about purpose—what could bring the company together might be introducing attributes such as openness, respect, and collaboration, which to Céline were important aspects to gender balance—and the concepts regarding humanism. He listened and agreed that gender balance was an issue and something that needed to be solved. But the community that Céline launched—which won her all of those awards—was only one facet of change, and only one element to Céline's ongoing quest for development and personal purpose.

A savvy Chief Quality Officer at Sanofi Pasteur picked up on Céline's talents (and purpose) and asked if she might be interested to relocate to Boston. Today, Céline is the Head of Quality Innovation and Engagement, working alongside a culture change consultant on the implementation of new behavioral and collaboration practices to improve various aspects of quality across the company. Then, ideally, the model will be utilized by other parts of the organization. "My passion and my purpose have turned into my dream job. I absolutely love what I do and I hope this project will bring real change across the entire organization."

Being the pragmatist of self-based purpose, Céline also laid down a personal warning shot of sorts. "I am cautious and alert and mindful that the

battle is not won yet. There is still a lot of work ahead of me. I will not fall into complacency, and I need to demonstrate innovation in all of my actions. No matter what, I will continue to hone myself. My purpose will remain a development journey. You have to remain as independent as possible, not letting other people develop your path. They can help—with your role, team and organization—but you should always be in charge of your purpose.”

When individuals possess a passion for learning, growth and improvement, it can help deliver on their personal sense of meaning, which can also create positive benefits for the organization in which they work. Take Henry Ford, for example. Ford was constantly learning, inquiring and investigating. Through his efforts came the invention and perfection of the assembly line needed for mass production of the automobile. He also is credited with inventing the two-day weekend, something that materialized from his learning. Or consider Steve Jobs. Aside from his notoriously bad people management skills, Jobs was famous for asking an extraordinary number of questions inside of Apple in the product development cycle, not to make himself look smarter but to learn enough such that he solidified the quest to reinvent the music, phone, television and computing markets.

Ultimately, if the team member is constantly redeveloping their skills and building up their experience—painting over their canvas—the attainment of a personal sense of purpose may become smoother and clearer. It might even become beneficial to all stakeholders, too. Céline, Sanofi Pasteur and their stakeholders clearly are reaping the benefits of her personal sense of purpose.

## Define Who You Mean

Abraham Maslow once wrote, “It isn’t normal to know what we want. It is a rare and difficult psychological achievement,”<sup>4</sup> but I contend team members ought to try to prove Maslow wrong. Aldous Huxley perhaps provided a positive antidote, when he wrote, “Knowing who in fact we are results in Good Being, and Good Being results in the most appropriate kind of good doing.”<sup>5</sup>

Kelsy Trigg, a leader in the high-tech space, was having dinner with me one night in 2011 when she shared her personal purpose statement. She did not refer to it as such, but Kelsy highlighted something that night that made



me think. Do people who exhibit purpose define themselves with some form of personal purpose statement? In the words of Huxley, does this definition aid “good being and good doing?”

Kelsy’s working life purpose was and continues to be a journey. Whether as an independent contractor or analyst working for banks and insurance companies, or as a leader (director, head, vice president) in high-tech, she is highly regarded. But the path to purpose came with a few bumps along the way. Although Kelsy is someone who continuously puts purpose before profit, she had to sort through what gives her true meaning in life and at work. Her giving attitude, thoughtful character and open mind are carefully mixed with operational zest and a high degree of business stratagem. Today she is a consummate and balanced professional that sees her career as a journey of exploration.

Over that dinner, we launched into a discussion about purpose, specifically about one’s personally defined sense of purpose. Kelsy pulls no punches. Her purpose is a testament to her character, and to her self-created definition of how she lives life, both at work and personally. Though it was likely years in the making, when Kelsy put pen to paper, the words came easily and she distilled it into:

- I decide to live my life filled with joy.
- I decide to be generous, open-hearted and loving.
- I decide to show up wholeheartedly and be present.
- I choose courage, integrity, peace and love.

This personal purpose statement has served Kelsy well. Her ability to define who she is and how she will operate—deciding to live and work through the behaviors and attributes outlined above—helped vault her to a level of work that continues to be grounded by her purpose. But Kelsy did not have this clarity until her late 30s. Her prior experiences, roles and organizations helped her to develop enough acumen so that she could reach a point in her life to define what truly mattered.

Indeed, over another dinner in 2015, Kelsy divulged how important the personal purpose statement had become for her. “For me, the language ‘I decide’ is very powerful, whether it’s deciding how I show up or deciding

what my next step in something is. This doesn't ensure a particular outcome or necessarily impact those around me, but it does provide a sense of grounding and choice about how I respond to my internal and external environment, no matter what my surroundings hold. When I internalized this, it brought a sense of calm for me. My happiness is my responsibility. How I show up is my choice."

Two points come to mind with respect to Kelsy:

1. Defining yourself through a personal purpose statement is an important step in the quest for workplace *and* life purpose.
2. Individuals should not be afraid to revisit the statement over time to determine if it continues to resonate.

Jill Schnarr, vice president of Community Affairs at TELUS, provides another example about the importance of these personal purpose statements. During the fall of 2013, I had the chance to moderate both virtual and face-to-face panels of TELUS vice presidents during the kickoff to the Leadership NOW program—the high-potential leadership development program for roughly 700 TELUS team members each year. Jill kindly volunteered to be a part of a face-to-face session held in Vancouver as well as an online session. The panels were an unscripted, unrehearsed chance for senior leaders at the company to provide feedback and insight on topics such as leadership, career, work-life balance and health. I moderated the panels, and the last question at each of the sessions was for panel members to articulate three words that best described their own mantra. Not missing a beat, Jill was first to respond in the face-to-face Vancouver session with the following:

"I live by the 'be easy to' mantra. Be easy to . . . work with, do business with, talk to, connect with . . . just 'be easy to.' It is so important in our line of business, for our team members and in our communities." Jill did not know the question was coming, but had already established her purpose statement into a three-word stanza.

During Jill's 20-year career at TELUS, she continually has worked to develop her skills and experience—including roles in marketing, customer service and community investment—and throughout her tenure she has lived (and worked) by a simple yet powerful three-word professional

mantra “be easy to.” Later, over tea, she also noted, “I’ve also lived by a famous quote and have used it all the way from high school—it’s published in my Grade 12 yearbook—and to this day it’s hanging on a wall in my office.” The quote is as follows:

To laugh often and much; To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; To appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.

Despite the fact this quote has long been misattributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson by Hallmark and other misinformed companies, instead of its original 1904 writer, Bessie Anderson Stanley, you can clearly see how Jill has used this passage to help define the way in which to operate. She has developed her work self to mirror her life self, which is “be easy to” and to succeed, per the hopeful words of Stanley. For further proof, Jill continued her quest both to define and redefine herself by applying to (and being accepted into) the TELUS MBA program, commencing studies in October 2015.

In his seminal 1989 book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey encouraged people to create a personal mission statement within the second habit, “Begin with the End in Mind.” While it may seem like semantics, I would prefer to call what people like Kelsy and Jill and others have defined as a “Personal Declaration of Purpose.” This differs from Covey’s “Personal Mission Statements,” for it is purpose that one is seeking to declare and then establish, not a mission.

The question a successful team member is continuously asking and answering—who indeed is creating a personal sense of purpose—is: “Who am I in life *and* at work?” There is no one right answer, nor should it be viewed as a competitive task against peers and friends. It is an ongoing definition, not a one-time commandment. It can occur in your 20s or your 90s or at several points in between. Constantly redefining who one is in life and at work increases the likelihood that *The Purpose Effect* will be realized. Being relentless in the quest for personal purpose is key to

achieving the sweet spot. An excellent starting action is to define one's self through a personal declaration of purpose. It may change over time. That can actually be healthy. The key point, however, is to take the time to define it and, ultimately, to know thyself.

## Decide How To Be

Decisions. We make them every day. Whether they are big ones, little ones, important ones or novel ones, decisions are as prevalent as tourists in Paris. With respect to one's purpose of self, a decision is needed in just about every aspect of the journey. But the one ongoing decision that an individual makes to cement their personal sense of purpose is whether or not they will choose to act with integrity.

To operate with integrity is about more than making a choice between honesty and dishonesty, right and wrong. It is about wholeness, about individuation. Personal integrity, *wholeness*, is suggestive of someone who acts with a higher purpose, demonstrating their trustworthiness, reliability and authenticity. All too often, we witness the lack of such characteristics in our social, political and business leaders. An illustrative case in point was the exit of CEO Martin Winterkorn from Volkswagen in September 2015 in the wake of a scandal relating to the rigging of emission tests on diesel engines.

Integrity and the concept of being whole can help determine whether someone (or an organization) is ever going to achieve *The Purpose Effect*. How one acts is often how one will be perceived.

Eric Liddell was a British Olympian known to many through the 1981 Academy Award-winning film, *Chariots of Fire*. His decisions and demonstration of authenticity helped define his purpose. In preparation for the 1924 Paris Summer Olympics, Liddell and his coaches were informed his race specialties—100 meters, 4x100 meters and 4x400 meters—all fell on a Sunday. A devout Christian and missionary, Liddell intended to keep a promise to himself, his family and his Church; he would never run on the Sabbath.

Although the British press derided his decision—claiming he was putting God before country—Liddell remained whole, stayed true to his values and made a decision not to deviate from what mattered most to him. Instead, he requested that the British Olympic Committee allow him to train and race in the 200 and 400 meter events. Although not his preferred races, doing so

would permit him to remain whole as those events were scheduled on days outside the Sabbath. Liddell went on to win a bronze medal in the 200-meter race and a gold medal in the 400-meter event. He was lauded as a hero across the United Kingdom. We might even argue Liddell and the British Olympic Committee both benefited from Liddell's decision to remain whole.

Clayton Christensen, the famous Harvard academic and author of such books as *The Innovator's Dilemma* and *Disrupting Class*, provides another example. When he attended Oxford University, Christensen was a member of the varsity basketball team that went undefeated for a year. The only thing in the way of a perfect season was the championship game. The match fell on a Sunday. Like Liddell, Christensen was a devout Christian. What to do? Like Liddell, Christensen refused to play on the Sabbath. He decided to sit out the championship game. On the decision, Christensen remarked, "The lesson I learned from this is that it's easier to hold to your principles 100 percent of the time than it is to hold to them 98 percent of the time."<sup>6</sup>

The sorts of decisions that Liddell and Christensen (and arguably Winterkorn) demonstrated can ultimately impact where, with whom and how one works. It can affect one's acceptance of whether they are leading a life (or a working life) of purpose. Take for instance Michael Bungay Stanier.

"I want to infect a billion people with the possibility virus," Michael said to me. If one decides to work with authenticity, a statement like this might just do the trick. After years of toiling in roles and organizations that were not delivering much personal purpose—not making him whole—Michael made the decision to go out on his own and launch an organizational development firm he coined Box of Crayons. The company has since helped hundreds of organizations including Tesco, TD Bank, PWC, Nokia, Citibank and Nestlé. Box of Crayons wants to help people and organizations "do less good work and more great work." The person behind it all is Michael—the one who wants to infect a billion people with the possibility virus—but his decision to work in this manner was not easy.

"I've been engaged with this question, 'What the hell is the point of it all?' for quite a long time," Michael divulged during one of our discussions. "I spent a long time seeking a path that would create a more purposeful life. I've always had a slight nervousness of following the expected path. School, university, marriage, house, kids, career and so on is the commonly

held preordained path, but it isn't necessarily the right path. This thesis has allowed me to stay present, and helped me figure out the right path. It helped me with my decision making."

After a few years working in various "decreasingly purpose-driven companies that led to misery all around," Michael decided that the process and the output of his working life were insufficient. The question he began asking himself—the decision he was seeking to make—was, "What sort of outcome did he want from life?" "I recognized I was simply inventing the next soup for Heinz or Campbell's," Michael indicated. He cheekily continued, "I did not want to leave a legacy of having invented stuffed-crust pizza." Michael had been developing and defining his *what* and *who* of personal purpose, but the manner in which he was operating—his *how*—was leaving him less than fulfilled. "After a significant period of self-reflection," he added, "I realized that the process of my work was insufficient. A better outcome had to become a big part of what I was doing in my life."

Michael launched Box of Crayons to complete the circle of creating his *what*, *who* and *how*. Michael confided that "even after creating Box of Crayons, it took some time to figure out the purpose of the company. We had to develop and decide what we wanted to be. But then this notion of the possibility virus became so much of what we wanted to do. Box of Crayons became a firm to give people the responsibility for enacting their own freedom. I can't personally touch a billion people, but I can infect people in a way that is shareable and accessible. This way of being influences me each and every day. We continually ask ourselves at Box of Crayons, 'How do we give away our content and intellectual property in a useful way—sharing with the tribe—so it helps others with their own purpose?'"

Michael may not have been prescribed to decide whether to run or play basketball on the Sabbath, but he forced himself to make a series of decisions concerning his working life. Eventually he made himself whole. Shifting himself from a mindset without purpose (floundering in an unfulfilled mindset) to one full of purpose ensured he upheld his own definition of authenticity and integrity. The decision to operate in such a manner has benefited both Michael and the thousands of people he and his organization have touched. Indeed, it seems he is well on his way to infecting billions of people with the possibility virus.

## Knowing Myself

If you have ever heard the adage, “salt of the earth”—those who demonstrate great reliability and worth to others—Tim McDonald more than fits the bill. He is an example of someone who continues to develop, define and decide what his place is in this ever-changing world.

Tim started out his professional life in real estate. He was very successful. Not in the backwards Donald Trump real estate manner, but simply because he was really good at what he did. He probably could have continued in real estate until eventually retiring and would have done very well for himself and his family. In the mid-2000s when the market was crashing in his hometown of Chicago, he began observing and hanging out with some of the developers in the real estate office—college kids, as he calls them—who were exposing him to a new set of social networking tools like Facebook and Twitter. A light bulb went off. The connection time to build up potential relationships could be quickly reduced. Even more, the number of relationships one could build could increase as well.

Connections. Connecting with people. That is what brought purpose to him, not real estate. Realizing this (in fact, Tim was continuing to sort out how to *know thyself*), he set out to land a marketing job, thinking some combination of marketing, high tech and making connections was going to be the ultimate place of purpose. Although Tim eventually became the Director of Communications at the Social Media Club Chicago, it did not fill that nagging void of personal purpose. He was still empty. Tim was still analyzing his purpose of self, but the adjudication result was less than stellar. His canvas needed repainting. His definition needed reworking. He did not yet know *thyself*.

So he continued to hunt (more than ever) to achieve this personal sense of purpose. In the meantime, he was exposed to another term: community manager. The problem now became one of exposure. There was not a lot of information about community managers on the Internet at the time, so quite naturally, he created his own site, naming it “My Community Manager.” It became a connections portal of sorts. From there, to help build up better relations with the connections (and community), he began utilizing Google Hangouts. He became “hooked” on live stream video as a means to establishing and enhancing these connections, friends and relationships. This was helping to fuel Tim’s definition of himself. He was not yet done with his journey, but he was getting close to a better state of knowing

thymself. Tim was inching toward a workplace scenario that began to make far more sense than any other previous role or situation.

On his trek he then took a giant leap forward to the ultimate decision of what he has become today. Based on what he was doing from the “My Community Manager” site he created on his own, *The Huffington Post* approached him to relocate to New York City and become its first community manager for their HuffPost Live service. Imagine that! From real estate to the purpose empire that Arianna Huffington built. Off he went to New York City.

But a funny thing happened during his time at *The Huffington Post*. Tim was working in a role that fueled some of his passions, but still found he was not entirely fulfilled. He finally had come to a place in his life where he could properly “define” who he was, continuing to “develop” what he was about, but he did not like *how* he was working.

He said to me during an interview, “During my time at *HuffPost*, I realized that there was so much more to life than climbing the corporate ladder or becoming the next Facebook or Twitter. It was about looking at the relationships we have in life and how we can make a lasting impact on them.” It was Tim’s penchant to ask the questions in his own Agora—what am I doing to evolve my character, who will I become in life and at work, and how will I operate and be perceived by others—that led him to a personal epiphany of sorts.

While taking part in a Changers of Commerce meeting in Dallas where he was speaking on stage about his role at *HuffPost*, leaders from Be The Change (BTC) Revolutions—an organization that aims to mix communities with social good—approached him. They asked Tim if he might be interested in joining their social council for the No Kid Hungry foundation. He jumped at the chance, and after a few months of his volunteer efforts—and realizing that his true purpose and focus in life was one of giving—he was asked by BTC to join them in a full-time capacity. As McDonald says, “It was like the person you have a crush on asking you if you wanted to go on a date!”

Tim knew leaving *HuffPost* would not be easy, but he also knew that “finding a place where I could live my purpose-driven life was an opportunity I couldn’t pass up.” He added, “Becoming more vested in working with organizations doing good has allowed for my work and life to be purposeful beyond my wildest dreams.” Tim’s job title at BTC



Revolutions is now the Purveyor of Purpose. Not to be satisfied with the status quo, after joining the firm he also co-founded CreatingIs, a non-profit organization that brings together people (unsung heroes as Tim calls them) who are changing the world in terms of social impact.

As we will witness over the remaining chapters, one's role at work and the organization's ethos and operating practices can have a significant bearing on a team member's personal sense of purpose. But purpose always starts with the self. Without properly developing, defining and deciding one's self, the likelihood of *The Purpose Effect* coming to fruition may be minimal, if not impossible.

Megan Smith is lucky to have discovered and realized all three facets of purpose—personal, organizational and role—since she first joined SAP more than a decade ago. But her own sweet spot starts and ends with the passion-development-reward triangle she articulated. Céline Schillinger is an example of someone who has been relentless in the pursuit of personal meaning in life and at work. For her, it is a constant battle to ensure the balance of experimentation, networking and learning is front and center. Kelsy Trigg and Jill Schnarr are individuals who not only paint over their canvas to continue learning; they define themselves with authenticity and meaning. Michael Bungay Stanier was busily developing and defining himself, only to look in the mirror one day and decide the trajectory he was on was unsuitable, and unfulfilling. He decided to put purpose first. Tim McDonald suggests the personal purpose journey is never over. One ought to be constantly asking if the current situation is as good as it could be.

In the quest for and creation of personal purpose, each of these individuals continuously develop, define and decide. There is no such thing as status quo. There is no complacency. Their monocle of inspection—the emergence of meaning—hinges on the recurrent pondering of three key questions:

- **What** am I doing to evolve my self?
- **Who** am I in life *and* at work?
- **How** will I operate and be perceived by others?

William Ernest Henley ends our investigation into the establishment of one's personal sense of purpose with the following passage:

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate:  
I am the captain of my soul.<sup>7</sup>

As mentioned earlier, personal purpose is the perpetual journey to develop, define and decide your *what*, *who* and *how*. But unless you are independently wealthy, you must work for an organization (or start your own as was the case for Michael Bungay Stanier) in order to pay for groceries. What does the ideal organization look like? How can that organization develop, define and decide its own purpose? What exactly is organizational purpose? The [next chapter](#) explores these and other questions regarding the true purpose of the organization.

## CHAPTER SIX

# DEVELOPING ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSE

*If you want to succeed you should strike out on new paths, rather than travel the worn paths of accepted success.*<sup>1</sup>

John D. Rockefeller

*One doesn't discover new lands without consenting to lose sight, for a very long time, of the shore.*<sup>2</sup>

André Gide

Since its inception in 1945, Johnsonville Sausage LLC has believed in delivering sound business results. It does so within a culture of fairness and organizational purpose. This company of 1,500 employees (which it has the decency to call “Members”) produces all sorts of sausages, meatballs and bratwurst from various facilities, including its headquarters in Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin. Ralph C. Stayer, who has been the visionary and owner for the past 40 years, has taken the company from a regional sausage supplier within Wisconsin to the global player it is today. The company has sales in excess of \$1 billion annually.

I met Cory Bouck, a leader at Johnsonville Sausage, in 2012. I have been intrigued by the organization’s purpose and operating practices ever since. Take, for example, the Johnsonville Way culture statement:

- We at Johnsonville have a moral responsibility to become the Best Company in the World.
- We will do this as each one of us becomes better than anyone else at defining, and then serving, the best interests of all those who have a stake in our success.
- We will succeed by setting near-term objectives and long-term goals that will require a personal growth and superlative performance by

each of us. We will change any objectives or goals that no longer require personal growth and superlative performance to ones that do.

- As an individual, I understand the Johnsonville Way is about my performance and my accountability to the team. My commitment to stretch, grow and excel is an unending one.
- This is the Johnsonville Way and I am committed to it.

In an interview, Cory mentioned to me that, “It’s a great place to have the role that I have,” indicating one of the owner’s inspiring turn-of-phrase sentiments is why he and so many members have a sense of purpose in their work. As Bouck told me, Stayer often states, “Most companies use people to build their business. At Johnsonville, we use our business to build our people.”

But I was not only interested in the organization’s values and culture. I wanted to know how it continually delivers on its goals and objectives in what is an ultra-competitive landscape, the food industry. I wanted to know why its 1,500 members seem to perform ethically and fairly. I was curious why its members are continuously empowered by senior leadership and also thought of as family. I wondered if this sausage company was achieving the sweet spot, helping its team members do the same in the process.

“Our owner, Ralph Stayer, has incredibly high standards,” said Cory. “But he also believes that it would be morally wrong to hold people to incredibly high standards without also giving them every opportunity and resource to stretch and grow themselves in order to be able to deliver against those high standards.” The company has created quarterly commitments (referred to as PDCs—Personal Development Commitments), which allow its team members to report on their progress through an internal web portal. It is open and transparent, and thus anyone can see what is going on at any time with anyone’s performance and objectives.

What it suggested to me was that Johnsonville possesses an internal culture that is mature, open and collaborative, but it also is one that is driven to perform. If anyone can view a PDC, you may not want to be caught napping. More importantly, the culture is so supportive, a Johnsonville member would not want to disappoint a fellow member. It is

the opposite of how many organizations think of performance management today.

At the core of Johnsonville's business strategy is something they refer to as HICS: Highest Impact on Customer Success. "HICS is a tool," as Cory explained, "that is invoked in daily conversations at all levels by members from all the various teams within Johnsonville." Think of HICS as a moral and cultural responsibility at Johnsonville to ensure everything they do is with the customer in mind, at the highest quality possible, through an engaged workforce. Bouck believes its team members are continuously striving to deliver and attain purpose in their roles. The organization has created an environment for both the team member and itself to reap benefits, to operate with purpose.

The Johnsonville vision is: "To become the best company in the world that just happens to make sausage." Cory was adamant that "the difference between 'be' and 'become' is a big one." He not only believes it is aspirational, he believes the vision of Johnsonville is about the journey of the organization *and* the 1,500 team members to deliver value through a purpose. "It's a useful daily benchmark," he continued. "For example, did my actions and behaviors today reflect someone who's on a team that's trying to become the best?"<sup>3</sup> The types of actions and behaviors that Johnsonville has defined—and which team members carry out—are key to organizational purpose. They are an important component to the achievement of *The Purpose Effect* sweet spot.

## Testing Organizational Purpose Through Cars, Pills and Sausages

In the face of adversity—when pressure mounts or calamity seems imminent—an organization's purpose is put to the ultimate test. Every organization faces one or multiple forms of stress at some point in its existence. Often an organization takes the easy route, either to uphold its profits and revenues, or to ensure power and reign continues. An organization that endures any form of financial hardship or business loss will regularly be forced to test its purpose, to test its standing in society. What did Johnsonville Sausage do when it experienced an event that could have ruined their entire culture, and perhaps their financial stability? Did the company ignore the organizational purpose it had worked hard to inculcate across its business? Did it neglect the team members who had committed to purpose, and to the organization's quest to "To become the

best company in the world?” We will find out shortly, but first let us investigate two different approaches to a crisis.

When Lee Iacocca—a vice president in the late 1960s at Ford—was under pressure to combat the emergence of Japanese and European cars, he fast-tracked the design and development of a car known as the Pinto. Impervious to several design defects—including the fuel source being placed too far to the rear of the vehicle, and the omission of a small plastic insulation cap for protection—the gas tank in the Pinto was poised to rupture and leak on the force of an impact, causing a vehicle fire. Knowing this was an issue, Ford (and Iacocca) turned a blind eye. The cost-benefit analysis suggested the company could simply pay out any loss of life or injury at a lower cost versus recalling and fixing all Pinto automobiles. Several accidents resulted in catastrophic fires—including death and serious injuries—and only until the company realized it was affecting sales across the company, and lawsuits began to pile up, did it finally recall the Pinto and fix the problem. In this example, profit trumped purpose.

In 1982, seven people died in Chicago when bottles of one of Johnson & Johnson’s product lines, Extra Strength Tylenol, were tampered with and cyanide was added to their contents. Johnson & Johnson’s credo—written in 1943 by its CEO, Robert Wood Johnson II—includes the line, “We are responsible to the communities in which we live and work and to the world community as well.” The crisis of 1982 tested both the organization’s resolve and its purpose.

Without hesitation, the company pulled all 31 million bottles of the product from the shelves of its retailers across the globe. At the time, Tylenol was Johnson & Johnson’s best-selling product, accounting for 17 percent of its income in the previous year.<sup>4</sup> However, did that stop the company? Did it deviate from its purpose statement, its credo? The organization did not buckle. In fact, Johnson & Johnson put customers, team members and the community ahead of any penchant for profit or lost revenues. It might have cost the company well over \$100 million, as well as lingering consumer skepticism, but its purpose was never in question. The company asserts its credo “is more than just a moral compass.”<sup>5</sup> That is, Johnson & Johnson does not allow its purpose statement (the credo) to merely sit on a website or company walls. It takes action as necessary.

Even in the face of adversity with the Tylenol scare, Johnson & Johnson ensured its organizational purpose did not waver, putting communities,

customers and employees ahead of profits. Ironically, perhaps, its actions led to increased consumer confidence in the company. Increased revenues and profitability also continued. By the end of 2015, Johnson & Johnson had realized 32 consecutive years of adjusted earnings increases and 53 consecutive years of stock dividend increases. It earns more than \$75 billion in annual revenue, but it remains steadfast to its giving mission, too. Johnson & Johnson annually donates 7 percent of its pre-tax income (cash and non-cash philanthropy) to the communities in which it serves. That percentage amounts to almost \$1 billion in community giving annually, suggesting profit can indeed be paired with purpose in the face of adversity and without.<sup>6</sup>

Let us fast forward to the spring of 2015. Johnsonville Sausage suffered its own tragedy and was forced to test its organizational purpose. On May 11, a freak incident of physics and biology occurred at one of the company's largest facilities where it produces sausages. At this particular location in Watertown, Wisconsin, a combination of oil, pressure and heat mixed up with a pair of gloves that were inadvertently put in the wrong place, at the wrong time.

This freakish combination of the gloves and materials led to a spontaneous combustion, and the result was an explosion and resulting fire that decimated the plant. Investigators immediately ruled out any foul play. It was simply bad luck. The incident occurred in the middle of the night, so luckily there were no deaths or injuries. There were no livestock in the building either. However, the facility employed 100 Johnsonville members, and come May 12, there was nothing left to work on. After all, there was no longer a facility to make sausages. What to do?

The first order of business company executives decided was to keep all of its members "whole." They continued to pay their wages despite an obvious lack of sausage to produce. "The plant was really bad," Cory informed me in a follow-up discussion. "Everything had to be thrown away. All of the equipment was affected. Water and charred materials do not mix with stainless steel, and everything immediately became rusty. We quickly realized this was not going to be a one-week job. At the time, we felt it was likely going to be a three- to four-month job."

The Johnsonville members in Watertown helped with the facility cleanup. But after a week or so, there was nothing more for them to do at the plant. In fact, the location where the fire occurred had to be permanently closed.

Executives made another decision. While arranging to purchase a new property and build a new facility, the company asked everyone to remain on staff to do two things.

First, Johnsonville arranged for each member to dedicate 20 hours per week volunteering time in the community. Landscaping, teaching and general community improvement efforts across Watertown became the objectives. Second, the members were asked to spend the other 20 hours of the work week developing, learning and educating themselves. The education happened at various Johnsonville Sausage sites as well as local education institutions.

“Treating our people with dignity,” Cory said, “was our number one priority.” While the fire was not the fault of any individual, the company felt compelled to treat its members as decently as it could, and no one was terminated during the months when there was no sausage to be made. After all, their team members were an important stakeholder in the Johnsonville way of doing business. Its members had always demonstrated a commitment to the Johnsonville Way, and the organization was not about to leave them out to dry. Maybe we might call this “reciprocal purpose.”

The new facility did become operational again but not until early 2016. After almost a year without producing a single sausage at this location, the 100 team members affected by the fire remained on the company payroll. Their “job” through this time period? They were asked to give back to the community in which they lived, while developing themselves through various forms of education. “It was the right thing to do,” said Cory. “We have a commitment and responsibility to each other. What else would we have done?”

An organization, rather obviously, is made up of people. For the organization to define and enact a more purposeful mission and strategy, it must be done by the people of the organization. For many entities, this is the work of senior leadership. The more inclusive and open organizations ask team members for their opinion. Both Johnson & Johnson and Johnsonville Sausage defined, followed and acted upon their respective purpose. Ford did not. In fact, at the time, Ford’s purpose remained fixated on profit, devoid of any real additional meaning or purpose. But the company did eventually turn things around.

Like all automobile manufacturers in 2009, Ford plunged into a precarious state of financial instability due to the economic crisis, one that



rivalled the 1929 depression. Alan Mulally—President and CEO of Ford at the time—worked extremely hard to avert complete ruin. One key strategy he introduced was something called ONE FORD, its new purpose.

Mulally started the initiative to restate its purpose but also to inculcate collaborative and cooperative behaviors among its team members in order to address the crisis. Introduced as a graphic, the left side contained three defining statements (ONE TEAM, ONE PLAN, ONE GOAL) that outlined “people working together” and an “exciting viable Ford for all.” On the right side of the graphic, Mulally used the word Ford as an acronym further detailing how they would set a new course. The details included:

- Foster Functional and Technical Excellence
- Own Working Together
- Role Model Ford Values
- Deliver Results

The subtext included such phrases as, “Believe in skilled and motivated people working together” and “Have a can-do, find-a-way attitude and emotional resilience.” Not only did Ford return to profitability under Mulally, the company was the only major American car manufacturer to avoid government intervention and bailout funds. Mulally summarized his thoughts on both leadership and purpose by stating, “Leadership is having a compelling vision, a comprehensive plan, relentless implementation, and talented people working together. People also want meaning. All of us want to know that we are doing great things, that we are touching a lot of people, and that what we are doing is something bigger than ourselves.”<sup>7</sup>

Purpose is not an exercise in lip service. Organizational purpose—the second of three categories that help to create the sweet spot in *The Purpose Effect*—is the opportunity for a firm to define its principles, ethics, leadership and culture. It is the chance to establish who its stakeholders really are. But it is imperative for the organization to *act* on this definition, too. Otherwise, the organization remains in jeopardy of becoming fixated on profit and/or power as its sole purpose. If it remains locked into such

behavior, not only is society being defrauded, team members might never demonstrate a sense of purpose in their role at work.

## A Plum Decision

Founded in 1989, Plum Creek Timber had revenues of roughly \$1.4 billion in 2014, and a team member population of approximately 1,200 people worldwide. Their mission statement reads as follows:

We are stewards of land, working forests and natural resources, dedicated to enhancing asset value while protecting the environment and promoting prosperity in the communities where we operate.<sup>8</sup>

Plum Creek operates the organization through eight belief statements. These belief statements, much like the Johnson & Johnson Credo or Johnsonville Sausage culture statement, help to guide the organization with business decision making. The highlights of the Plum Creek belief statements are as follows:

- Responsible environmental stewardship creates superior long-term value.
- Our people work together to achieve exceptional results.
- Intellectual capital drives innovation.
- Community engagement is an essential part of doing business.
- Our customers deserve quality goods and services.
- Partners that share common values and beliefs produce the best results.
- Superior shareholder returns come from innovation and leadership.
- Strong corporate governance and an ethical business culture drive accountability.<sup>9</sup>

An organization not only should define its purpose, it must actively and consistently demonstrate the behavior. If the organization is not demonstrating its purpose, it may be viewed by its stakeholders as one that is “all talk, no action,” something I first surfaced in *Flat Army*.

What if Johnson & Johnson did not remove the bottles of Tylenol from those shelves? What if Johnsonville Sausage decided not to keep its team members “whole” during the long months the company recovered from the fire? What happened to the reputation of Ford at the time of the Pinto crisis? It is individuals who carry out organizational purpose. It is individuals who define an organization’s purpose. The organization is merely the vehicle. It is driven by individuals. In 2014, Chief Executive Officer of Plum Creek, Rick Holley, provides another example how individuals must decide how it will uphold an organization’s defined purpose.

During the company’s end-of-year analyst conference call in 2014, Holley was put on the spot by Chip Dillon, an analyst from Vertical Research Partners. Dillon was reviewing the company’s regulatory filings and came across a particular if not unusual discrepancy. The CEO of Plum Creek had recently given back over 4,000 units of restricted stock to the Board of Directors, due to vest in just a few short years. The total personal payout to Holley would have been over \$2 million.

When Dillon questioned Holley on the move, the CEO mentioned rather casually his personal level of discomfort with the stock award due in part to the sagging performance on the Plum Creek stock that year. It was as if it was no big deal to Holley. The company was not doing particularly well financially, so he decided he was not going to benefit either. An ethical culture highlights accountability. It is one of the core beliefs that Plum Creek subscribes to. Holley’s decision translates belief into action.

As he went through this decision-making process in 2014, Holley was clearly demonstrating the mission and beliefs at Plum Creek. He was putting the purpose of Plum Creek well ahead of his own personal financial gains. Imagine what Plum Creek customers and employees thought once they heard about it. Part of his verbatim response on the analyst conference call provides further insight:

As we went through the year, our stock was under-performing, per the S&P 500 and other metrics, and I went to our Board and I said I’m not

comfortable taking this stock run and I'm going to return it. So I was not pressured to do it by shareholders or by the Board. And I didn't ask the Board's permission to do it. I just said I'm not comfortable with this. The shareholders haven't had a return this year and Rick Holley is not going to get one either. I returned the 4,445 shares of restricted stock. So it's basically as simple as that.<sup>10</sup>

We might claim the action that Holley took was a good deed. In fact, Johnsonville Sausage, Johnson & Johnson and Rick Holley at Plum Creek Timber are all examples of firms (and people) defining *and* demonstrating organizational purpose through a number of good deeds. When an organization successfully defines its purpose to be something that consists of more than profit and/or power—while actively demonstrating said purpose at all times—it is the stakeholders that ultimately benefit. When the organization defines and demonstrates a greater purpose, it creates a scenario in which team members can feel a sense of purpose in their role, ideally complementing how they have developed, defined and decided their own personal sense of purpose. Organizational purpose is the second of three components in the quest to achieve the sweet spot of *The Purpose Effect*.

## A Deed That Is Good

What is a deed? According to the Oxford Dictionary, a deed is “an action that is performed intentionally or consciously.” A deed is also referred to as a legal document, something that is signed and delivered. Think of property ownership documents or an item related to legal rights. For *The Purpose Effect*, we will use the first definition and consider it alongside a well-known expression, “doing good deeds.”

Good deeds can be performed for anyone. Good deeds also can be performed *by* anyone. I might shovel my neighbor's driveway after a snow blizzard, or I may donate money to my colleague Bryan Acker's worthy cause of helping to eradicate cancer. When I save 10 percent of my earnings for the future, as David Chilton taught me in his book, *The Wealthy Barber*, I am performing a good deed when it comes to my future, and *for* my family.

A stranger who opens her doors to other strangers in need of lodging, as many residents of Gander, Newfoundland, did when air travelers were stranded on September 11, 2001, is performing a good deed in the community. I once witnessed a family of four cleaning up garbage that had been collecting in the bushes adjacent to Jericho Beach in Vancouver. When I asked the father what they were doing as I was walking past, he replied rather gleefully, “It’s our family’s good deed of the month.”

Researchers have long studied humans (in life and at work) with respect to acts of giving. Adam Grant, for example, provided us with the book, *Give and Take*. It turns out we are hard-wired to do good acts and we give (and want to do good) without the need for any kind of vainglorious recognition. Some researchers claim this is because humans are naturally pro-social. “When people are primed to see themselves as good people,” claimed one study, “who do good for goodness sake, not to obtain public credit, they may be motivated to do more good.”<sup>11</sup>

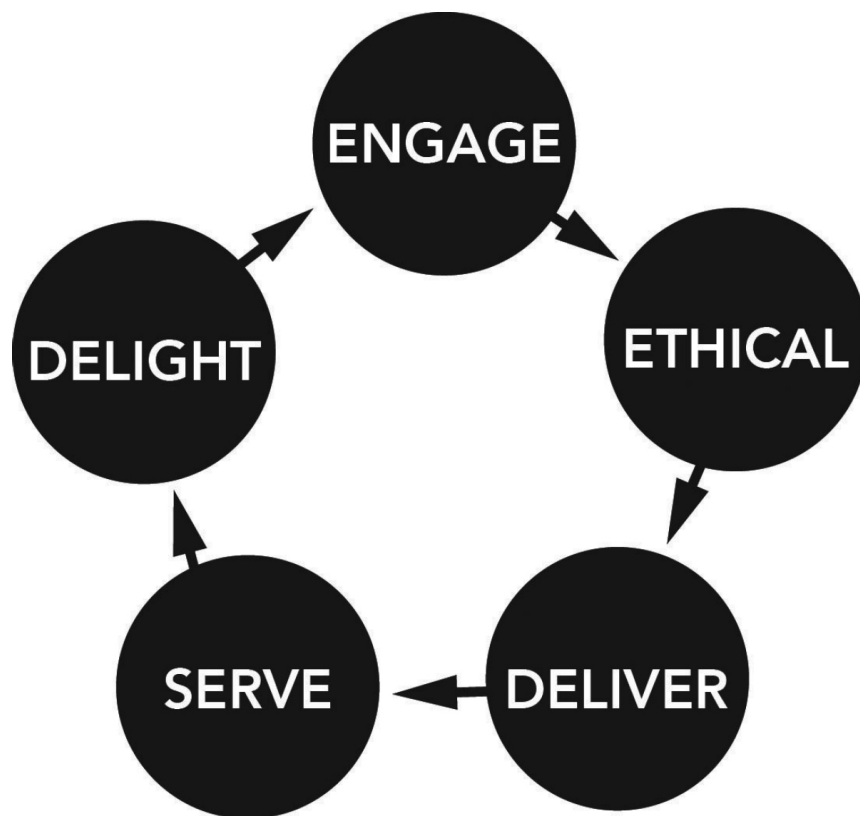
As Adam Grant writes, “The more I help out, the more successful I become. But I measure success in what it has done for the people around me. That is the real accolade.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, a good deed helps others, and that in itself is a success. Of course, it was philosopher Epictetus who once wrote, “Know you not that a good man does nothing for appearance sake, but for the sake of having done right?”<sup>13</sup> Perhaps good deeds result in doing good.

This brings me to the “Good DEEDS” of the organization, the second major component to *The Purpose Effect*. As with the examples of Johnson & Johnson, Johnsonville Sausage, Ford or Plum Creek Timber, an organization’s purpose defined to reflect a more harmonious society is performing a good deed. The organization can no longer fixate solely on profit or increased shareholder value, if it is a for-profit entity. It can no longer fixate on power and bureaucratic supremacy if it is a not-for-profit, public sector or even a for-profit organization. In order to help team members (and the organization) to achieve the sweet spot—in order for society to truly benefit from an organization’s actions—I have discovered there are five key principles that purposeful organizations define and constantly employ. I refer to these as the Good DEEDS. They are:

- Delight your customers

- Engage your team members
- (Be) Ethical within society
- Deliver fair practices
- Serve all stakeholders

It is my intent over the remainder of this chapter to define each of the five components that make up the Good DEEDS. In [Part IV](#) of the book, I will identify tips and strategies to implement each of the five parts.



## Delight Your Customers

Whether the organization is a for-profit, not-for-profit or a public sector institution, the primary stakeholder audience is the key group the organization serves. I am referring to the customer. It matters not if the organization is built to make money, to provide charitable service or to serve citizens. Organizations ought to commit to delighting its customers, remembering why the organization exists in the first place. If there are no

customers, there is unlikely to be an organization. If there is no organization, somewhat obviously there are no roles. While a public sector institution will obviously remain in operation, how can it be an attractive place to recruit new team members or to innovate new services to better serve its citizens, its customers? Put simply, if the organization does not delight its customers—the people it ought to be working for—neither team members nor the organization can reach the sweet spot for there will be a damaged organization left remaining to carry out its mission.

Take for instance IKEA, the opposite of a damaged organization. This Swedish company—formed in 1943 by 17-year-old Ingvar Kamprad—continues to demonstrate the mantra of always putting customers first and subsequently impressing them. There is no other or ulterior motive at IKEA. It has continued to dedicate itself to value and service, always in appreciation for—and solely intended to delight—its customer base. We need not look any further than its simple, yet elegant vision crafted in 1943 by Kamprad himself.

To create a better everyday life for the many people.

This is a furniture company (and maker of meatballs in the millions), but it simply wants to help its customers improve their “everyday life.” Its purpose could not be any clearer for its team members, suppliers, investors or customers. It cannot be clearer for any number of stakeholders. The customer comes first. The company and its vision have certainly helped millions of families over the years. Stop for a second and try to name another global furniture brand. Furniture companies tend to be regional, not international. Why is that? How can IKEA be a global brand, committed to making everyday life better for all global citizens, yet it is a furniture company?

IKEA also created what it refers to as “The Business Plan.” This is an organization intent on helping customers improve their everyday life (the IKEA purpose), but it also wants to improve the lives of “the many people” through quality, affordable, valued service and goods. IKEA’s business plan—an addendum to its purpose—reads as follows:

We shall offer a wide range of well-designed, functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible

will be able to afford them.<sup>14</sup>

*Forbes Magazine* ranks IKEA's brand as the 40th most valuable in the world (at \$12.5 billion), and annual revenues are just shy of \$40 billion, gained from its 345 stores in 42 different countries. Not only is there a customers-first purpose and a customers-first business plan, the company instituted the "Human Resource Idea." It reads as follows:

To give down-to-earth, straight-forward people the possibility to grow, both as individuals and in their professional roles, so that together we are strongly committed to creating a better everyday life for ourselves and our customers.

Despite using a term like "human resource," you get the picture. From the moment the company was formed to its growth as a \$40 billion company, it has consistently put its customers first, delighting them in the pursuit of value and service. This has been its overarching purpose. Its investment in its team member—who delivers value and service to its customers—is the manner in which it achieves its customers-first quest. Like Johnson & Johnson, IKEA recognized early on that without the customer (and the purpose-driven team member), there is no reason to be in business. Like Johnsonville Sausage, its belief in its team members permits its organizational purpose to be realized across the globe.

When discussing why IKEA has not ventured into a line of furniture that might be considered high-end or expensive, Kamprad responded, "All nations and societies in both the East and West spend a disproportionate amount of their resources on satisfying a minority of the population. In our line of business, for example, far too many of the fine designs and new ideas are reserved for a small circle of the affluent. That situation has influenced the formulation of our objectives."<sup>15</sup> As we surfaced earlier, "There is only one valid definition of a business purpose: to create a customer."<sup>16</sup>

The first principle of the Good DEEDS is to "Delight Your Customers." IKEA is an example of an organization that carries this trait out in its organizational mission, actions and strategies. When an organization makes delighting its customers a key component of its organizational purpose,



team members are more likely to buy in and provide such value. If the customer is thought of as secondary—and profit and/or power remains the true organizational goal—it is easy to understand why team members may not be fulfilling either their personal or role-based purpose wishes.

## Engage Your Team Members

The word “people” is derived from Old French “peupel,” which means “mankind” and “humanity.” The word also stems from the Latin “populus,” which translates into “body of citizens.” Mankind, humanity and a body of citizens are precisely what an organization needs if it is to successfully develop and deliver *The Purpose Effect*.

Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria (BBVA) is the second largest bank in Spain. It possesses over 112,000 team members spread across 31 countries serving 51 million customers. Total assets are approximately €600 billion. Its singular purpose is a bit like IKEA. “At BBVA we are working for a better future for people.” The people it is referring to, however, is both its customers *and* its team members. The people are its body of citizens. The bank maintains that its many team members “play a key role in promoting a culture of social commitment and shared values.”

BBVA believes team members are the fuel to a brighter future, both for BBVA and its customers. It insists that an engaged workforce, utilizing “new styles of behavior” is its core strength and where “increased competitive advantage” is realized. BBVA is an organization that chooses to engage its team members, knowing there is a causal relationship between an engaged workforce, customer satisfaction and business results. Consulting firm Great Place to Work placed BBVA in its top 15 best places to work global rankings in 2013. “Teamwork as the key to generating value,” is one of BBVA’s operating principles. Organizations that aim to establish purpose in its mission (like BBVA does) ought to be engaging its team members, instituting teamwork, collaboration and connectedness as ways in which to deliver on its (more purposeful) operating mission.

We might argue that there is an invisible reciprocal social contract between a team member and their boss, between the people of the organization and the organization itself. Any employment contract dictates a team member is remunerated for performing in a role that the organization has defined. A social contract—albeit invisible—is much more than an employment contract. It is a team member’s responsibility to carry out role-

based duties in a manner that is socially acceptable to the organization's strategy. A call center agent must be respectful when talking to the customer. A service technician must be polite in the home of a customer. A software engineer must not create code that harms other systems. An agency worker must not divert funds intended for the homeless. But the organization should also be responsible for upholding their end of the social contract. This comes in the form of engagement, of engaging with the team member. For organizations to deliver on the social contract, it ought to create a culture of engagement. IKEA and BBVA are but two examples of organizations that engage with their team members in order to construct organizational purpose.

When team members are authorized to innovate, contribute or to take action, their commitment to the organization increases exponentially. When this occurs, the team member has a greater chance of achieving purpose in their role. Evidence by researchers correlates a culture of autonomy and inclusion with increased engagement.<sup>17</sup> Peter Senge also taught us to become a "learning organization" by focusing on "the openness needed to unearth shortcomings."<sup>18</sup> That openness comes if the organization is engaged and engaging with its team members. If the behavior of relatedness is utilized, team members become more trustworthy of the organization, and thus the social contract might more easily materialize.

When conducting a global study of over 90,000 workers worldwide, Towers-Watson discovered that the biggest single driver of discretionary effort was senior leadership's sincere interest in team member well-being. In a follow-up report released in 2012, the firm discovered virtually no progress had been made. Only 45 percent of senior leadership admitted to a "sincere interest" in their team members' well-being.<sup>19</sup> If psychologists believe that the well-being of team members will lead to engagement, self-actualization at work and a sense of purpose in a team member's role, there is evidence to suggest improvements ought to be made by the organization to help team members with their well-being. This could be a helpful clue in the creation of the sweet spot.

The holy grail of engagement—and thus engaging with team members—is not a new orthodoxy, cobbled together by perquisites and happiness tricks. An organization's destiny lies in the development of an open, trusting, transparent and connected culture where team members feel safe to contribute and to consume knowledge and ideas. It is an environment of

caring and of curiosity. Engaging with team members is the difference between a command-and-control operating ethos to one that is cultivating a community of collaboration.

When I asked John Helliwell, Senior Fellow and Co-Director of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR) Program on Social Interactions, Identity and Well-being, if he felt there might be a link between purpose, engagement and people, he had this to say:

Why not treat your next elevator ride not as a short-term prison sentence but rather as a social occasion waiting to happen? Human beings are inherently social, and pro-social, beings endowed with the capacity and need to cooperate with others whom they trust, and with whom they identify. Forging new social connections broadens the scope for building trust and designing new ways to cooperate to good purpose.<sup>20</sup>

The social contract between team member and the firm ought to be strengthened if the Good DEEDS of organizational purpose is ever to come to fruition. In other words, the organization has a responsibility to remember the word “human” is found in the word “humanity.” An organization’s body of citizens—the humans—are yearning to be engaged. “Engaging with team members” is the second key principle to enacting the Good DEEDS of organizational purpose as we continue to hone *The Purpose Effect*.

## (Be) Ethical Within Society

Team members are an easy and telling target to qualify an organization’s ethics. After all, they work for the organization every day. They see a lot. They witness the good and the bad. When you ask team members if their organization is indeed ethical, the answer might surprise you. When Towers-Watson queried respondents concerning ethics and public believability, only 58 percent claimed their employer was “ethical and highly regarded by the public.”<sup>21</sup> Not surprisingly, that number dropped to 29 percent for team members who considered themselves disengaged at work.

More evidence comes from the Ethics Resource Center (ERC). The ERC was established in 1922 and is “America’s oldest non-profit organization devoted to independent research and the advancement of high ethical standards and practices in public and private institutions.” In a research report, the ERC reported that of team members who are engaged in their organization, a shocking 61 percent had witnessed some form of ethical misconduct.<sup>22</sup> Being ethical within society, therefore, is the third principle to the Good DEEDS. Specifically, an organization must sort out how it can be ethical while it seeks to better society.

John Bogle was the founder and now former CEO of The Vanguard Group, an American investment management company responsible for approximately \$3 trillion in assets. He is a staunch Republican. In his book, *The Battle for the Soul of Capitalism*, Bogle laments a system fixated on profit, shareholder value and what he calls “Managers’ Capitalism.” His entire career has been in the business of making money within the financial services sector. If a profit-minded financial investment manager worth millions is worried, I wonder if we all should be. One particular passage caught my attention in his book:

I also see far too much greed, egoism, materialism and waste to please my critical eye. I see an economy overly focused on the “haves” and not focused enough on the “have-nots,” failing to allocate our nation’s resources where they are most needed—to solve the problems of poverty and to provide quality education for all. I see our shocking misuse of the world’s natural resources, as if they were ours to waste rather than ours to preserve as a sacred trust for future generations.<sup>23</sup>

Bogle outlines ethical concerns with respect to the environment, citizens and the communities in which we live. For organizations to create a purpose, the scope of ethical interest must widen its swathe.

Is the organization concerned for society, or has its operating ethics negated a chance for higher purpose? Regarding publicly traded organizations, it is worth wondering whether existing fiduciary responsibilities to investors give them the excuse not to care about such factors as philanthropy, community investment or the environment. Are they exploiting consumers by focusing on an individual’s wants versus

society's needs? Are for-profit firms even permitted to look out for the interests of all stakeholders . . . and not just shareholders or profit seekers?

Forest Reinhardt, Robert Stavins and Richard Vietor, all of Harvard University, were interested in the same question. In a research paper, they wrote, "As long as managers claim some plausible connection to future profitability, the business judgment rule grants them substantial leeway to commit corporate resources to projects that benefit the public." Put differently, the researchers found it is legally acceptable for an organization to financially invest and support other causes in parallel with their quest for increased revenues and profits. There is no legal reason for a company and its corporate directors to maximize shareholder return or profits. Recall Joel Bakan's concerns from [Chapter 3](#) and the "best interest of the corporation" principle.

While research indicates it is perfectly fine to be ethical—balancing purpose with profit—the question to ask next is whether the for-profit organization ought to do so. More importantly, would an ethical stance toward becoming a more sustainable organization impact its profitability?

On the subject of whether corporate social responsibility is an effective use of time and money for the organization, the Harvard researchers wrote, "For most firms, CSR pays for itself." On whether or not profit is surrendered, they stated, "Evidence on sacrificing profits in the social interest is lacking." It may seem ironic, but being ethical and advocating for corporate social responsibility will ultimately pay off in the end for the organization.

According to the researchers, it is perfectly fine for a publicly traded company to act ethically within their shareholder requirements. Indeed, organizations are permitted to serve interests greater than profitability.<sup>24</sup> Surely companies that are not publicly traded, public sector and non-profit in nature, can adopt the same philosophy. Regardless of your organization's makeup, being ethical within society is a good practice and can help the organization become more purposeful.

There are other benefits, too. In his research paper, "Authentic Purpose: The Spiritual Infrastructure of Life," Corey Keyes notes, "The ethical ethos of organizations is central, because companies in which more employees perceive their workplaces as ethical report higher retention rates, more positive work and supervisory relationships, better dispute resolution and enhanced productivity."<sup>25</sup>

The chair of BBVA, Francisco González, articulated the importance of ethics and its impact on BBVA's purpose:

The BBVA team are part of a corporate culture based on the principles of integrity, prudence and transparency, which have been key in allowing us to build a strong business model that is able to grow and is very customer centric.<sup>26</sup>

Aristotle once wrote, "Every art or inquiry aims at some good." It is incumbent upon the organization to both define and enact a more ethical purpose. It must aim not only at being good, but *doing* good. If the for-profit firm decides that shareholder return is its modus operandi, then it becomes its sole purpose. If any type of organization decides that power or prestige is its raison d'être, then it becomes its sole purpose. If an organization cares not for the planet or the community it inhabits, should it be considered ethical? The organization has a responsibility to distinguish between what appears to be ethical, with what actually is ethical. There is no such thing as being part ethical.

Martin Luther King once said while speaking at Oberlin College, "The time is always right to do what's right."<sup>27</sup> Indeed, for the Good DEEDS to come to fruition within *The Purpose Effect*, organizations must make it a priority to define a new way in which it becomes ethical. If an organization wishes to aid society, being ethical ought to be a key component. When the organization does so, not only is it supporting our planet, it just may inculcate a set of purpose-driven behaviors that many team members will be drawn to, support and advocate both in their personal lives, and in their roles. If this happens, there is a greater chance for role purpose to be demonstrated by team members, too.

## Deliver Fair Practices

For an organization to survive and thrive, somewhat obviously, it must deliver results. Many organizations accomplish their goals, however, saddled by a maddening display of Kafkaesque bureaucracy, antiquated procedures and disengaging personnel practices. Results are demanded from the team member, but the manner in which to improve how they come about is ignored. To accomplish its goals, the organization shifts into an

obsessive demonstration of such adages as cost containment, downsizing, rightsizing, outsourcing, workforce re-balancing and the “do more with less” pitch. Many of these issues cause individuals not only to slip into workplace disengagement, but it likewise reinforces distrust between the team member and the organization.

Unsurprisingly, it can be part of the reason many of today’s organizations lack purpose. It may be a clue concerning a lack of role purpose or personal purpose for team members, too. If the organization does not treat its people fairly, how will those team members feel in their roles? Conversely, if an individual’s personal sense of purpose is thwarted by an organization’s lack of concern to replace various workplace inanities, it is questionable whether purpose will ever be reached in *The Purpose Effect* concept.

If a team member is going to enjoy working for their organization—if they are to possess the courage to delight its customers—there is a veritable avalanche of operational practices to consider retiring or updating. If the organization aims to deliver on its goals—but doing so with purpose—there are institutional processes we must contemplate overhauling. Goodhart’s Law states that any observed statistical regularity tends to collapse once pressure is placed upon it for control purposes. Perhaps the introduction of organizational purpose may trigger such a collapse. Maybe it manifests through the introduction of the fourth component to the Good DEEDS —“Deliver Fair Practices” to team members. There are three facets in particular that are in need of fine tuning: compensation, performance management and recognition.

Compensation fairness is arguably one of the toughest nuts to crack to assist organizational purpose. There are always two sides to a coin. Take for instance an example concerning McDonald’s. In 2012, when the company’s COO, Jim Johannesen, issued a memo to its U.S. franchise owners requiring them to stay open during key holidays (U.S. Thanksgiving and Christmas Day), the company decided that normal hourly wages would be paid on these statutory holidays. The restaurants were formerly closed on these dates. Uproar ensued among some of the McDonald’s team members. Company spokesperson, Heather Oldani, said in a statement, “The staff voluntarily sign up to work. There is no regular overtime pay.”<sup>28</sup>

Oldani is correct. The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) in the United States does not require overtime pay for statutory holidays. But is what McDonald’s decided *fair* for those team members who volunteered to



work? Should they have been paid more? In Canada, for example, law dictates the payment of extra compensation benefits for individuals working on statutory holidays. It varies from province to province, but in British Columbia for example, any individual is entitled to 1.5 times their hourly rate for the first 12 hours. After that, it becomes double time plus an additional day off with pay. Is it fair? Is it fairer than McDonald's?

A competitor to McDonald's in some Western regions of the United States is In-N-Out Burger. With roughly 300 restaurants and \$500 million in revenues, its business is a fraction of McDonald's. Interestingly, it has decided not to open on Thanksgiving or Christmas Day holidays. Furthermore, it pays its team members more than any state mandated minimum wage. In fact, the company boasts about it. "We start all our new Associates at a minimum of \$10.50 an hour for one simple reason . . . you are important to us!"<sup>29</sup> The 2013 Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) Benchmark Study that surveyed 10,000 fast-food burger restaurant patrons ranked In-N-Out Burger first with 66 percent satisfaction and McDonald's 11th at 32 percent satisfaction.<sup>30</sup>

"I find it a remarkable notion that McDonald's can't afford to pay an increase in the minimum wage but In-N-Out Burger can," said United States Labor Secretary, Thomas E. Perez, in 2014, when discussing wage practices in the United States. "They [In-N-Out Burger] do it for the same reason—it's about reducing attrition and having a more effective workforce."<sup>31</sup> Recall the compensation story of Dan Price, CEO of Gravity Payments, from [Chapter 3](#). Not only did he decide to raise the minimum annual wage of all team members to \$70,000, he also lowered his own salary by 90 percent. Team members do not need millions in wages, but for purpose to manifest in their roles, fair compensation is something to potentially reconsider.

Current performance management practices surface another opportunity for organizations to reconsider. Companies such as Microsoft, Adobe, Juniper Networks and Expedia have all done away with the stack ranking process of performance management, where a leader pits team members against one another, ranking and placing them against an arbitrary bell curve of performance. Bob Rogers, president of DDI (a leadership development company) writes in his book, *Realizing the Promise of Performance Management* that the process of stack ranking, of segregating



team members, “causes damage by filtering employees from the bottom, and causes changes in people’s behavior, and not to the good.”<sup>32</sup>

For a team member to feel and demonstrate purpose in their role—for the organization to indeed demonstrate purpose—the mechanisms by which an individual’s performance is rated needs in-depth scrutinizing. If you want to demonstrate that you care about the people you work with, focus on coaching and mentoring as rankings and annual reviews rarely help.

Sir Richard Branson of the Virgin empire highlights the need for recognition. In one of his columns, Branson observes, “We give our people real autonomy, and celebrate their achievements by identifying star contributors, highlighting brand ambassadors in our internal newsletters and hosting parties for individual employees.”<sup>33</sup> Recognition is known to help a team member feel purpose in their role, which also can benefit the organization’s purpose. As Mark Twain once wrote, “I can live on a good compliment two weeks with nothing else to eat.”<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, recognition should be practiced more widely in our organizations. A SHRM/Globoforce survey found 84 percent of leaders believe recognizing employees for their contributions and accomplishments provides a clearer understanding of the organization’s objectives.<sup>35</sup> When team members were asked by research firm Psychometrics what leaders could do more of to improve engagement, 58 percent wished they received more recognition at work.<sup>36</sup> But does recognition aid an organization and its requirement for improved results?

To test the effect of recognition on performance, several academics in Europe created a work environment experiment where 363 people were hired to perform a three-hour data entry job each day over a six-month period. Workers were not aware they were taking part in the experiment, but they received a flat wage of 25 euros each day. When thank-you cards were given to all workers in one of the groups, the researchers found performance increased by 5.2 percent compared to the group that received no recognition and whose performance did not increase. What is quite interesting, however, is that the performance of those who did not receive recognition—but were aware of others in their group receiving public recognition—increased by 10 percent. This suggests individuals have a preference for both conformity (I want to be recognized like the others) and

reciprocity (If I give recognition, surely my peers will give me recognition later). The result is an increase in performance.<sup>37</sup>

Improving compensation, performance management and recognition practices are three key aspects I recommend organizations consider as they attempt to “Deliver Fair Practices” for their team members. If an organization can indeed deliver fair practices, the likelihood of the sweet spot being created increases for all parties.

## Serve All Stakeholders

John Mackey is the co-founder and co-CEO of Whole Foods. He firmly believes that stakeholders, not shareholders, should benefit from an organization’s derived value. This conviction developed into his notion of *Conscious Capitalism*, which led him to co-author a book on the subject with Raj Sisodia. The authors invite the reader to, “Imagine a business that is a committed and caring citizen of every community it inhabits, elevating its civic life and contributing in multiple ways to its betterment.”<sup>38</sup> Those benefiting from an organization’s value, as Mackey suggests, ought to be all stakeholders, armed by a firm’s “higher purpose, stakeholder integration, conscious leadership and conscious culture and management.”

In the private firm’s pursuit of profit—in some cases aided by the aggressive expansion to operate in new jurisdictions or outsource expensive costs to inexpensive markets—it seems companies serve the balance sheet rather than the customer. For *The Purpose Effect* to come to fruition, each organization must define who it really serves. The fifth and final component to the Good DEEDS, therefore, is to “Serve All Stakeholders.”

The term “stakeholder” was originally coined at Stanford Research Institute in 1963 to describe “those groups without whose support the organization would cease to exist.”<sup>39</sup> Author and futurist Don Tapscott wants organizations “to be honest and considerate of the interests of their stakeholders, and that includes society at large.” In an opinion piece, Tapscott indicated we, “Need multi-stakeholder approaches” and that society will require “more complex multi-stakeholder decision-making models.”<sup>40</sup>

Without a doubt, stakeholders ought to be made up of everyone that an organization might affect. José Ignacio Goirigolzarri, BBVA Group Chief Operating Officer, suggests his bank, “has a clear and ambitious business

project in which the creation of value for all becomes our driving goal: shareholder, clients, society, and of course, our team. This is what we mean by ‘passion for people.’”<sup>41</sup> As BBVA has done, other organizations should consider redefining their stakeholders—the groups they ultimately aim to serve and benefit. Some assistance might come in the form of work previously established by a group dedicated to such a cause, Benefits Corporation.

Benefit Corporations—more commonly referred to as B-Corps—seek to take into account the welfare and interests of all stakeholders in its operations. This position includes the communities in which the organization serves, employees, the environment, customers, partners and any relevant shareholders. In essence, the organization measures its success against each of these target audiences. A registered B-Corp (adjudicated by the Certified B-Corporation organization) must be “certified by the non-profit B-Lab to meet rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability and transparency”<sup>42</sup> in order to achieve accreditation and good standing. As of 2015, B-Corps are legislated in 28 U.S. states, as well as in 40 other countries including Canada, France, Germany, Australia and the United Kingdom. By the end of 2015, the total number of organizations who have become B-Corp certified was over 1,400.

A B-Corp adjudicates financial, social and qualitative metrics as a basis for its success. It does not solely measure accomplishment by financial targets. A B-Corp organization does not serve shareholders or power-holders only; rather, it aims to measure its progress through all stakeholders. There may be advantages for team members when the organization redefines its stakeholders, too. Indeed, Ryan Honeyman, author of *The B Corp Handbook: How to Use Business as a Force for Good*, said to me, “Becoming a Certified B-Corporation can help unleash the passion, initiative and imagination of employees by connecting them with the larger meaning behind their work.”<sup>43</sup>

Vermont-based King Arthur Flour is as blunt as it is deft in the kitchen when it comes to describing their purpose. “Being a good steward of our community and our environment, treating our employees and our business partners with respect and remaining steadfast in our commitment to quality has been King Arthur Flour’s recipe for success for more than 220 years.”<sup>44</sup> It is an example of an organization that purposefully redefined who it

serves. The company's stakeholders are now made up of customers, owners, team members, the community and the environment. In their 2014 annual report, the company reported on each of its target audiences:

- King Arthur Flour currently pays all regular team members at least 14 percent above the state-identified livable wage.
- It invested \$193,000 in team member development, exceeding the target by 49 percent.
- It spent \$72,000 on employee wellness, 20 percent higher than the target.
- It donated \$182,000 in dollars, goods and time to the community, up 65 percent year over year.
- It provides 40 hours of paid volunteer time per year to part-time and full-time team members, meeting their goal of donating 3,238 hours of time in the community.
- It won the "Transportation Workplace of the Year Award" in the Upper Valley region of Vermont for their commitment to sustainable transportation, saving over 80,000 miles in commuting.
- All catalogue mixes and cake flour boxes are now made with 100 percent recycled fiber.
- The company gives back 1 percent of its sales to non-profits dedicated to protecting the environment.
- It achieved over \$100 million in revenues, and remains 100 percent team member-owned, utilizing profit sharing and allocations of stock through an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP).<sup>45</sup>

King Arthur Flour successfully redefined who it serves, but was not shy to report it had not met certain targets either. Its attempt to implement a more significant solar installation failed and attempts to evaluate the social and environmental impact of its suppliers did not occur.

## In Summary

Collectively, the Good DEEDS can, in fact, “do good.” When an organization’s senior leaders purposefully decide to delight its customers, engage with its team members, become ethical within society, deliver fair practices across teams and serve all stakeholders as it operates, organizational purpose can become well within reach.

On the subject of stakeholders, work and humanity, American inventor and author, Buckminster Fuller, introduced something he referred to as “The World Deal.” He, too, believed in good deeds. To conclude our investigation into the Good DEEDS of organizational purpose, Fuller’s statement captures what any organization might consider:

Make the world work, for 100 percent of humanity, in the shortest possible time, through spontaneous cooperation, without ecological offense or the disadvantage of anyone.<sup>46</sup>

Next, we will investigate the third and final component of *The Purpose Effect*—role purpose. This is informed by a team member’s personal purpose, the organization’s purpose, and various factors within the position itself. When in a role, team members will elect to work in either a job, career or a purpose mindset. The sweet spot shines brightly for both the individual *and* the organization if the purpose mindset is demonstrated a majority of the time. Let us find out next *why* and *how*.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# ESTABLISHING ROLE-BASED PURPOSE

*The true way to render ourselves happy is to love our work and find in it  
our pleasure.*<sup>1</sup>

Françoise Bertaut de Motteville

*Work and purpose are so closely connected that your work comes to an end,  
once your purpose is achieved.*<sup>2</sup>

David Steindl-Rast

In his book, *The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work*, Alain de Botton offers his own atypical perspective on working life:

Our work will at least have distracted us, it will have provided a perfect bubble in which to invest our hopes for perfection, it will have focused our immeasurable anxieties on a few relatively small-scale and achievable goals, it will have given us a sense of mastery, it will have made us respectably tired, it will have put food on the table. It will have kept us out of greater trouble.

It struck me as an odd way to end what I thought to be an otherwise splendid book. I could not disagree with his particular assessment more. Work is not to be a distraction for people but an important component to creating the sweet spot of *The Purpose Effect*. The roles we hold ought to be part of a greater purpose both for the organization *and* the individual. Individuals work to earn a wage, but also to provide additional meaning in their lives. The roles we fulfill every day at work are an important part of our identity. Is the work that we perform and the roles that we hold, therefore, merely a perfect bubble?

In his book, *Drive*, Daniel Pink clarified for us that mastery, autonomy and purpose were the key facets of personal motivation, not the quest to put food on the table.<sup>3</sup> Of course, there will be many instances and times when work feels less than desirable, almost like walking barefoot on shards of

broken glass. But our roles and the work we perform should not be a distraction. Contrary to what de Botton portends, the roles people hold in an organization should not be thought of as vehicles simply to keep us out of trouble.

One specific goal we should contemplate is how to seek out a role in an organization that helps fulfill our personal sense of purpose. Maybe the position is full-time, part-time or even on contract. Whatever the case, there is a responsibility on the individual's part to seek it out, and (ideally) to achieve it. Just before his death—in an interview with Bill Moyers on PBS—Joseph Campbell encapsulated the end result of those who find such purpose in their lives:

If you follow your bliss, you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while, waiting for you, and the life that you ought to be living is the one you are living. Wherever you are—if you are following your bliss, you are enjoying that refreshment, that life within you, all the time.<sup>4</sup>

By continuously developing, defining and deciding our “why,” team members are in a better position to adjudicate which organizations and roles are an appropriate match with their interests, values, beliefs. Their bliss, in other words.

Organizations have a part to play, too. As we discovered in the [previous chapter](#), an organization can provide a purposeful experience (and mission) for team members by implementing the Good DEEDS concept. It is in the best interests of the organization, however, to enact the Good DEEDS if it wants to retain and attract team members now and into the future. It is quickly becoming a “team member’s market.” An organization without purpose is running the risk of missing out on keeping or hiring high-performing individuals.

But the organization *and* team members possess a rather unique relationship in this third component to *The Purpose Effect*. In its simplest form, role purpose occurs when personal and organizational purpose aligns. Role purpose answers the question “why” a role exists in the organization, but it also will result in a team member demonstrating one of three workplace mindsets. In *The Purpose Effect*, those three role-based mindsets are: job, career and purpose.

The ideal scenario is for team members to possess a purpose mindset as often or for as long as possible, spending as little time as is feasible in the job or career mindsets. (We will revisit those definitions shortly.) If this purpose mindset materializes, the chances of the sweet spot being achieved by both the team member *and* the organization greatly increases. One exciting benefit of working more often in the purpose mindset than the job or career mindsets is that the benefits begin to multiply for all stakeholders.

## Calling Purpose

Yale professor Amy Wrzesniewski and her colleagues were some of the first researchers to define an individual's mindset at work. In a seminal paper published in 1997, they pointed out that regardless of the type of profession, team members end up classifying themselves into either a job, a career or what was termed a "calling." The breakdown was as follows:

- Job—work is not a major positive part of life
- Career—focus on advancement and growth
- Calling—focused on the enjoyment of fulfilling, socially useful work.<sup>5</sup>

As it pertains to a team member within *The Purpose Effect*, I propose slightly tweaked definitions of the three categories that Wrzesniewski and her colleagues identified. In fact, depending on the individual, I have discovered over my working life and through my research that some people might employ all three types of mindsets at various stages of a role or when performing specific duties.

Someone who possesses or demonstrates a job mindset is performing transactional duties in their role in return for compensation. These individuals who demonstrate the job mindset normally do so for one of three reasons:

- *It is a choice.* The only outcome an individual seeks from a role is to be remunerated.



- *It is a result.* The job mindset is the outcome of misalignment between personal and organizational purpose.
- *It is temporary.* From time to time, functions of the role will simply feel “like a job,” but it is ephemeral.

If an individual portrays a career mindset, they are generally trying to increase what I refer to as “workplace girth.” That is, the intrinsic motivation of an individual is selfish (versus selfless) and their role revolves around a personal crusade to advance one’s salary, title, power, team size and/or span of control. Individuals who exhibit the career mindset (determinedly or periodically) normally do so for one of two reasons:

- *It is a quest.* The sole purpose of one’s role is to climb the “career ladder,” caring little about the collateral damage.
- *It is a pre-requisite.* Whether to develop, learn or grow, an individual chooses to advance their role or position.

When an individual’s personal purpose (develop, define and decide) is aligned with an organization’s purpose (demonstrated by the Good DEEDS) the team member is likely to demonstrate purpose in their role more often than not. It may not be 100 percent of the time—based on episodic moments of job or career mindset situations—but it can be a predominant portion of the time. Someone who manifests a purpose mindset is passionate, innovative and persistently committed to working in meaningful and engaging ways to serve all stakeholders. Perhaps it results in an ethos that puts “Society First.”

As previously mentioned, *The Purpose Effect* is a companion book to *Flat Army*. It is the interdependency between the three mindsets (job, career, purpose) and team member engagement and culture—the thesis of *Flat Army*—that explains why there is such a difference between those who demonstrate purpose in their roles and those who do not.

Craig Dowden was thinking along these same lines. Research he spearheaded while working in Ottawa looked at the link between team member engagement and whether they were occupying a job, career or calling mindset. Craig discovered that those who possessed a job mindset were rarely if ever engaged in their work. On the contrary, for those who

believed their role fell into the calling category (what we are referring to as the purpose mindset in *The Purpose Effect*), roughly 76 percent were “always engaged” at work.

Furthermore, 83 percent of individuals in the calling category were highly committed to their organization while only 16 percent of those with a job mindset considered themselves committed to their place of work. Previous points I have raised in this book articulated the incredible impact a disengaged or uncommitted employee can have on customer relations, interactions, innovation, productivity and bottom-line results.

I interviewed Dowden, asking about the importance of role-based purpose. “Meaning is becoming increasingly important in today’s workplace,” he said. “Employees and leaders are spending more time figuring out their ‘why.’ Research continually shows that employees and organizations that are clear on their purpose benefit from higher levels of engagement, which positively impacts their bottom line.” Additionally, on the topic of benefits, Dowden explained, “Most people have lots of choices in terms of where to work. Most of us want to contribute to something beyond ourselves. Those companies who can tap into that need will really benefit.”

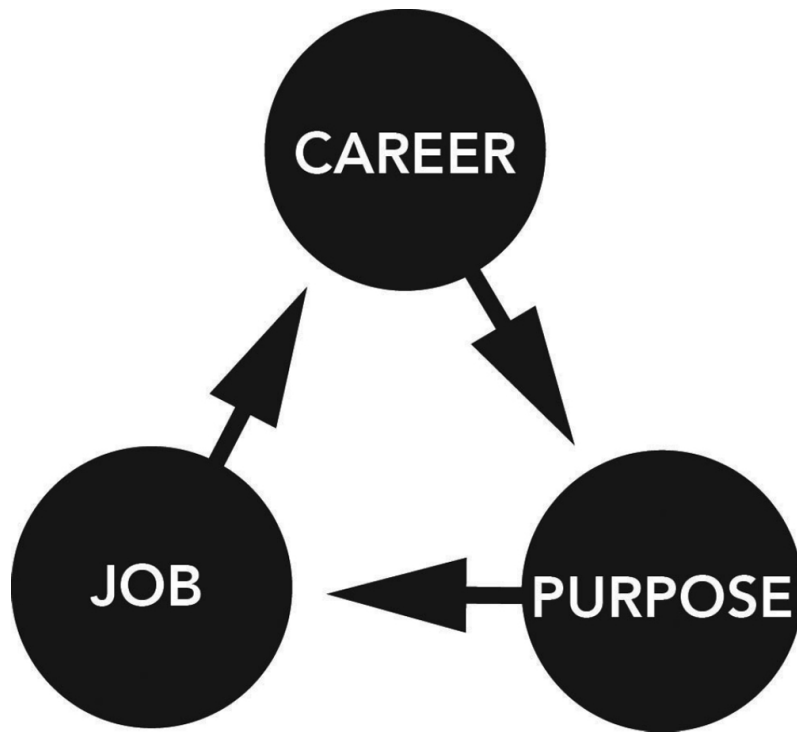
Wrzesniewski and Dowden, however, are not the only professionals to come to the realization there is a job, career and purpose mindset demarcation with respect to workplace roles. Author Chip Conley, for example, suggested in his book *Peak: How Great Companies Get their Mojo from Maslow*, “When someone finds meaning in their work (they like what they do each day) without meaning at work (they aren’t enthused by the company’s mission), it is much less likely that there is a ‘halo effect’ or indirect payoff in helping to improve their commitment with the organization.”<sup>6</sup> Again, there is a lot riding on role-based purpose for both the organization *and* the team member.

It should not be a surprise, but it is the organization that defines all roles needed to carry out its strategy and mission. An individual applies for a role—full-time, part-time or contingent—and performs any of the duties required in order to be remunerated. Those roles could end up being highly engaging or excruciatingly transactional for a team member. The organization creates the role, but it is the individual, of course, who must perform in it. What seems like workplace bliss for one team member may be painful for another.

The more alignment there is—the more a team member believes in the organization's purpose and its relationship to their personal purpose alongside the role they occupy—the greater likelihood there is for an individual to reach the purpose mindset and thus the sweet spot. If this happens on a continuous basis, both the organization *and* the team member will have created *The Purpose Effect*.

What happens to the team member, however, if they detest the role? What of those who are fixated on bullying their way to larger teams, fancier titles and greater power? What if the organization permits the operating culture to collapse, falling hard into a world devoid of collaboration or openness? Enron, Nortel and Volkswagen are examples of organizations that fell from grace, dismantling any sense of organizational purpose in the process. Johnsonville Sausage, Box of Crayons and TELUS are organizations that have defined their purpose in order that customers, team members and society get equal billing with profitability. Do those team members find it easier to demonstrate purpose in their role than those working in organizations without a strong purpose?

The rest of this chapter is devoted to the job, career and purpose mindsets that make up the third and final component of *The Purpose Effect*: role purpose. Team members tend to occupy one, two or all three of these mindsets as a result of the make-up of their role, their personal purpose and, of course, the organization's purpose.



## Making Mary Merry

Mary Hewitt was not the first team member I had ever dismissed. But she was—and continues to be—my most memorable.

When I started working at Crystal Decisions in 2002 as an Education Director, Mary held the title of Trainer. She had been performing the role for three years prior to my arrival. As a trainer, she would traverse the North American continent, delivering different types of instructor-led classes to customers, partners and employees alike. When Mary was back in the office, away from airplanes and training rooms, it provided a chance for the two of us to catch up on her well-being, the team and so on. It is fair to say we did not exactly get along at first. Those early conversations through my initial year as leader were at best perfunctory and at worst labored.

After a year or so, I invited Mary into one of the breakout rooms and asked how she was doing. I wondered if she was truly feeling good, full of meaning. By immediately shifting the focus of our conversation, Mary indicated she would be extremely grateful if I could eliminate some of the travel in her role. In fact, she hated being a trainer, particularly because of the travel. After some personnel shuffling, Mary switched roles and became a courseware developer, parking herself each day in an office chair rather than an economy class airplane seat.

After another year or so, Mary and I began having more conversations, this time focusing on her career and her life. Over a period of time and plenty of discussions, Mary shifted into a project management role. She remained grounded, working only in Vancouver. One day, after roughly a year in the new role, and getting the sense that things still were not right, I pulled Mary aside again and asked, “Do you think it is time you embarked on something that really is of interest? Do you know your true calling?”

Perhaps it was tough love. Maybe it was my attempt to help her to find her why, her bliss, her purpose. Whatever the case, it turns out Mary was feeling the same way. She wanted out. We then figured out a way to terminate her contract—together with a severance package—and she went out the front door of the office ready to begin seeking her personal purpose. She was escaping the job mindset that had characterized her roles as trainer, courseware developer and project manager. Her focus now was on developing, defining and deciding her new “*why*.” She took no issue with the organization—in fact she loved volunteering, being part of the team’s community involvement and to this day remains dear friends with several ex-colleagues—but she simply had been occupying time in various roles that were not fulfilling her personal purpose. The alignment between personal, organizational and role purpose was missing. Mary needed to seek out and establish the sweet spot.

For the next several years, she continued to develop, define and decide who she was going to be in life and at work. We continued to meet from time to time as well. Eventually, she meandered back into social work—achieving another Master’s degree—and it all came together. Today, her working life is now dedicated to the betterment of those in need. Mary works with personal and role purpose as a Clinical Therapist in Halifax at the Nova Scotia Health Authority, an organization that bills itself as “a community of caring, compassionate people who care deeply about health, healing and learning.”

One aspect of Mary’s story relates to her perseverance. She did not let the trappings of a job or paycheck mentality become a lifetime crutch. It took a while, but she eventually figured out her ideal path. She also refused to climb the career ladder for more pay or power. Mary was steadfast and determined to find an organization that matched her redefined personal purpose. Put differently, she had to first rediscover her goals and her

interests and then she had to seek out an organization and a role that matched.

“I realized and then decided,” Mary informed me, “that what I get paid to do needs to fit with what I know and feel to be my personal purpose.” She knows some jobs and even some tasks in a job will not always be rewarding. But along her journey, she discovered a key difference. “Where it became soul-destroying was when I realized I had done the ‘work for a paycheck job mindset’ for so long that I was out of alignment with my principles, values and beliefs. They were still at my core, but my core had gotten very small and personally, harder and harder for me to connect with.”

But there was another lesson Mary shared with me. “Certainly not everything I do, even now, fits exactly with my personal purpose. I have had to realize that some of the uncomfortable steps are still in the overall picture, contradictory to my overall purpose.” Mary had recognized that any role, in any organization, is going to be made of elements from the job, career and purpose mindsets. “But by recognizing,” she continued, “that personal purpose is not always consistent with what I get paid to do, I get to make a conscious, informed choice. The paycheck job mindset may in fact be enabling the steps toward role purpose.”

Role purpose is tricky. Mary’s story demonstrates it can take a while to achieve, too. As we explore the rest of this chapter, keep in mind Mary’s last point. More often than not, a role will be made up of aspects of the job and career mindsets. How one defines their personal purpose—and how the organization demonstrates its purpose—will be factors in achieving role purpose. But, there will always be elements of a role that are uncomfortable. Perhaps it is the alignment between personal and organizational purpose that predicts whether the majority of time spent in a role can be accomplished with purpose. Let’s next delve specifically into the job mindset and understand its makeup.

## The Job Mindset

Authors John Hagel, John Seely Brown, Alok Ranjan and Daniel Byler discovered a “passion gap” in America’s workforce. The researchers found close to 90 percent of workers were “not able to contribute to their full potential” due to a lack of “passion for their work.” Not surprisingly, they also found that only 12 percent of the workforce possesses the attributes that define a passionate worker. The authors suggest this so-called “passion

gap” is important to pay attention to because “passionate workers are committed to continually achieving higher levels of performance.”<sup>7</sup>

If one occupies a job mindset—working in a role to carry out transactional duties solely in return for a paycheck—can an increased level of passion lead to meaning in an individual’s role? Or, can the job mindset invoke any level of passion? Mary was arguably devoid of passion in various roles when she worked with me—leading to the job mindset—but once she developed, defined and decided her personal purpose, she quickly established her new passions and the sweet spot materialized, aided by the role and the organization that created the alignment.

Passion is one element related to a meaningful role (and potentially mitigating the job mindset) but so, too, is enthusiasm. Oxford Strategic Consulting (OSC) backs up this claim. OSC is a human capital consultancy business, doing work in Europe and countries that make up the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). It suggests that engagement is mainly impacted by three factors:

- One’s immediate leader or line manager (40 percent)
- An individual’s own propensity for enthusiasm and positivism (40 percent)
- The current work environment (20 percent)<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps passion *and* enthusiasm are underserved attributes in the makeup of today’s team member, which may be causing the job mindset to materialize more easily.

When someone possesses a job mindset, purpose is not the goal for the individual. They are content with the paycheck and possess no aspiration for a higher level of meaning at work. Further, the job mindset can become the result when poor team dynamics, negative leadership practices and an organization’s misaligned purpose and culture are paramount. (Many of these patterns and symptoms were surfaced in [Chapters 3 and 4](#).) Furthermore, if the team member has developed far too many extrinsic motivators as a basis for role happiness, they will undoubtedly remain in a job mindset.

Indeed, Ratan Tata, former chairman of the Tata Group in India, believes far too many organizations have been constructed around extrinsic motivators such as individual perquisites, financial rewards as well as the fear of reprimand or the potential loss of one's role. This potentially negates any possibility of a team member demonstrating behavior linked to intrinsic motivation. "Doing good" for the sake of "feeling good" becomes far less possible. Tata noted in *MIT Sloan Magazine*, "There is mounting evidence that employees throughout the world are hungering to find and bring their values to work," but unfortunately for the individual, "they have not felt comfortable in doing so."<sup>9</sup>

Place yourself for a moment in a medical clinic, hospice or hospital. No doubt you have been in one of those environments at one time or another, either as a patient or as a trusty supporter of some sort. When you interact with one of the professionals—be it the desk administrator, nurse, anesthesiologist, technician or doctor, among others—you immediately can recognize if the person you are conversing with is either there for the money or they are effortlessly working on cloud nine in their role. You recognize the signs like the Big Dipper might shine brightly on a starry summer night.

Is the nurse devoid of a smile, audibly exasperated as you begin listing your symptoms? When you approach the front desk to admit your family member, does the administrator even look up from the computer screen they are mesmerized by, possibly enthralled by a game of solitaire? Then there is the x-ray technician who does not seem to care about how hard he placed the lead apron vest on your chest.

Compare these overtly job-mindset individuals with medical professionals who seem to effortlessly float on the floors they patrol. Recall the attendant who not only smiles, but jokes around as you describe an ailment that has become bothersome. How about the doctor who does not simply rush in and out of the windowless room you have been waiting in, but sits down with zeal and curiosity truly wanting to get to know what discomforts you? What of the pinstripe-clothed volunteer who easily smiles, handing out lollipops to those passing by? My favorite is the retirement home caregiver who treats anyone in their vicinity—the deaf, incoherent, able-bodied, visitors or colleagues—as though they have been a lifelong best friend. Regardless of salary or title, these individuals seem as



though they are truly purpose-filled professionals—intrinsically motivated—in their roles and likely in their life overall.

Previously I suggested that a job mindset refers to someone who believes they are employed to perform transactional duties in return for compensation and not much else. For a portion of the population, the job mindset is perfectly fine. They want nothing from work other than the paycheck. These types of individuals fully understand the social contract between team member and employer. They do not seek to rock the boat nor do they expect anything more than the wage (and possibly any healthcare and related benefits) that accompany such an employment situation. Some organizations refer to this as “peace and pay.”<sup>10</sup> For those within this particular job mindset, their entire sense of identity (and personal purpose) might be found elsewhere in life.

The individual possessing a job mindset that accepts and acknowledges the job is in fact a remuneration transaction will demonstrate a job mindset—perhaps peace and pay—that is otherwise harmless to the organization. It may not be great for innovation, levels of increased productivity or decreased instances of absenteeism, but it does not cause any major or detrimental issue either. There will always be a percentage of team members in the organization who have this type of job mindset. Indeed, peace and pay is a rather appropriate term.

The far greater concern, however, rests with team members who are not aligned with the organization or cannot figure out why they are even in the role that actually provides them with a paycheck. It could be as a result of not properly establishing their personal purpose, being significantly misaligned with the organization’s purpose or perhaps the duties laid out in the role they hold are causing ruinous or questionable behavior. When a team member spends far too much time within the job mindset—and who does not demonstrate peace and pay—it creates issues for both the team members *and* the organization. The job mindset can result in any number of disengagement issues identified earlier, as well as in my first book, *Flat Army*.

Of course everyone must recognize there will be aspects of their role where they will have to perform boring, tactical if not repetitive tasks. There is no role in any organization where all job description requirements will match one’s personal purpose. A call center agent may not like solving a particular problem with a customer who is abrasive or loud. A project

manager may not like having to chase after colleagues for overdue actions. A CEO may not like discussing particulars of the past year at the annual general meeting with the public. I do not know of anyone who actually enjoys submitting expense reports. But they are all facets of particular roles-disliked actions everyone must come to terms with.

In summary, all team members will have to come to grips with the job mindset. It is inevitable. It is unavoidable. What is the larger question to answer? Will team members temporarily find themselves in the job mindset? Is this mindset permanent and the result of misalignment between personal and organizational purpose? Or is it a choice to simply be remunerated for tasks accomplished?

The job mindset can be detrimental to *The Purpose Effect*, to the sweet spot ever being created. The job mindset wreaks havoc with the alignment between the team member and the organization. What will you do to avoid it, temper it, if not eliminate it? I posit some strategies in [Chapters 8 and 9](#). For now, let us investigate the next type of mindset: the career mindset.

## The Career Mindset

Marcia has a managerial role at a highly successful creative marketing agency. She has been at the company for just over a year. Marcia does not have any direct reports, but is part of a team of 12. There are approximately 300 people who work at the company. Since joining, Marcia has been developing her role-based competencies, learning her way around the organization, building internal and external networks and getting various tasks and objectives accomplished. She reports into a director, James, who has been working at the organization for four years.

Marcia has become disillusioned—James is the reason why. He is renowned for taking credit for ideas that surface from the team, including Marcia. He uses those ideas to gain positive reviews from leaders at the vice-president level. James also occasionally uses his power as director to force his team to stay late—claiming senior leaders are watching—but refuses to thank any of the team members for doing so. From time to time, he remarks there is a long list of individuals wanting to join the company.

Adding insult to injury, James has issued vague threats to Marcia and her colleagues, citing potential termination if they do not complete their tasks on time. What has also become very clear is that the director is doing everything in his power to become a vice president. There are two roles

opening up due to retirement in just over a year's time. James has also been known to hoard key pieces of client information and refuses to collaborate effectively with others in the organization lower than the director level.

Ironically, he is seen as a far more positive person when in the company of other senior leaders. It is as though he is being an irrational professional.

Marcia came into the organization having already achieved a sense of role purpose in her previous company and role. She knows what it means (and what it takes) to be passionate, innovative and dedicated to a meaningful and engaging workplace, committed to serving all stakeholders. The organization where she previously worked had achieved a Good DEEDS ethos. Marcia knows what the sweet spot means. This sort of mindset is not new to her. Her former leader was open, transparent, collaborative and, most importantly, a listener. While working in San Francisco, Marcia and the company she worked for were both demonstrating purpose: personal, organizational and role.

However, James has become the blocked artery of Marcia's current journey. Although she joined the New York-based organization thinking she would be able to recreate the sweet spot (and thus role purpose) from her previous company on the west coast, so far in the new organization it is beginning to look like she will regress into the job mindset. Marcia seems a likely candidate to be employed to perform transactional duties in return for compensation and not much else.

This anonymized story outlines the damaging effect a career mindset can have on others. But the damage affects many parties. Clearly Marcia is caught in the middle, possibly set to veer into a job mindset. But what of the other team members James has come into contact with? What of the customers? Finally, what about James? How does this fixation on power, title and promotion help him ever achieve a sense of purpose at work, or in his own life?

I interviewed Dr. Linda Duxbury, noted trailblazer in the field of organizational health. Not only is she interested in researching the changing workforce and organizational dynamics, she has become a provocateur of sorts. "Look after yourself," she said to me when I asked what team members should be doing in today's work environments, particularly as it relates to the career mindset types. "Employees need to take control," she continued, "otherwise someone else is going to take control of their well-being at work." Linda was referring to the "develop, define and decide"

categories of personal purpose from [Chapter 5](#), and the importance of being in control of one's own purpose.

But my conversation with Linda reminded me of the situation between Marcia and James. James—with his career mindset firmly intact—has begun to control Marcia and her attempts to re-establish the purpose mindset she once held. Marcia is inching her way downward toward the job mindset, encroaching a percentage greater than 50 percent of the time. I asked Linda about it. She continued, “If you hate your boss, your boss probably hates you, too. Don’t keep yourself in your role if it’s hurting your health, family and life.” Indeed, Marcia is beginning to hate her boss. Is it reciprocal?

Linda published a research paper, “The Implications of Subjective Career Success,” where she stated, “An employee’s achievement of fulfilling work is the strongest predictor of their attitudes toward the job and organization.”<sup>11</sup> If James continues to be the blocked artery in Marcia’s quest for role purpose, the bottom line is that everyone is going to end up a loser, and a spiral into the job mindset will become inevitable for Marcia and potentially others. But make no mistake, it is James’ career mindset that is causing Marcia’s suffering and damage at work.

James is determined to increase three key facets of his role: salary, title and power. For some individuals drawn to the career mindset for the wrong reasons, money (or more of it) becomes the quest rather than an outcome of good work. This frame of mind impacts others. It is certainly impacting Marcia. Indeed, as Swarthmore psychology professor Barry Schwartz wrote in his book, *Why We Work*, “When we say of someone that ‘he’s in it for the money,’ we are not merely being descriptive; we’re passing judgment.”<sup>12</sup>

For individuals locked into a career mindset, there is a very low level of selflessness in their demeanor and actions. I liken it to a soap box derby, motorless wooden vehicles children build and then race against one another in a public competition.

While people may have helped you to build your vessel on wheels, even pushing you up the hill to the start line, when the race commences, it is you against everyone and your entire quest is to win. You do not care who might be in your way. The career mindset is a form of tunnel vision, analogous to the rider in the soap box derby. While the soap box derby is good fun for kids, if this competitive, solo-driven mindset were how children acted all the time, trouble would be brewing in many a household. Perhaps it is

comparable to the way James is treating his role, his organization and Marcia.

The career mindset individual is seeking to advance personal and professional status, not stakeholder well-being. They want to win, and at all costs. The career mindset individual is one who abuses their role in order to gain an upper hand on their colleagues, customers and society. It often manifests in the form of power and control, including much of what we covered in [Chapters 3 and 4](#).

Earlier I indicated the career mindset can become either a *quest* or a *pre-requisite*. James is demonstrating how the myopic and often bully-like pursuit of these sorts of attributes can denigrate a team's culture, if not besmirch a team member's personal sense of purpose. James is hell-bent in his quest and does not care about those he is negatively impacting. He has his helmet and goggles on and is racing his soap box derby car down the hill. In contrast, though, there also will be times a team member employs the career mindset as a pre-requisite, a more harmonious attempt to revisit one's personal purpose. Let us consider a few different examples.

A school teacher of seven years may seek out a Master's degree to prepare herself for a potential pay grade increase or vice-principal opportunity. A government analyst may secure the services of a coach and/or mentor to help him shift from one ministry to another. A director of sales may apply to take part in a non-profit governance program aiming to become part of a not-for-profit board. When a team member looks to continue honing their personal purpose—developing, defining and deciding—to grow their career and experience, make no mistake, this should be encouraged. This is not a bad thing. But when the action becomes a quest at the expense of others—versus a pre-requisite necessary to continue building out one's personal purpose—the differences become stark and dismal.

In the end, what happened to Marcia? She put up with James for another two months, not only hoping things would change, but going above his head and speaking with the unit's vice president about the situation. Although noble and arguably the right thing to do, nothing changed. Even though the organization was demonstrating most components of the Good DEEDS, James remained locked into a workplace attitude that was power-, money- and title-driven.

In this particular example, the career mindset of James pushed Marcia to the brink of frustration—to the cusp of the job mindset—but instead of

collapsing, Marcia took it upon herself to quit the company and start again. In line with Linda Duxbury's counsel, Marcia left the role in an attempt to re-establish her sweet spot, and the achievement of fulfilling work. She returned to the "develop, define and decide" stages of personal purpose, trying again to land in an organization that was exemplifying the Good DEEDS and finding a role that would be purposeful.

It took three more months of searching and "purpose testing," but Marcia did in fact re-establish the sweet spot again. Four years later, Marcia is still in New York, still in the same organization she moved to and is still in complete alignment between the personal, organizational and role categories of *The Purpose Effect*.

## The Purpose Mindset

Dr. Jennifer L. Aaker, social psychologist and professor at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business, published results proving "serious involvement with things beyond oneself and one's pleasures promotes meaningfulness." She goes on to state that purpose and meaning are "linked to doing things that express and reflect the self and in particular to doing positive things for others."<sup>13</sup> Indeed, on the subject of giving to others when at work, author Adam Grant opined, "You may be pleasantly surprised by the wealth of opportunities to express your values and find meaning in helping others without compromising your own success."<sup>14</sup>

There is more research that proves organizations and leaders who put purpose first will reap benefits. For example, several academics analyzed the interviews of 18,673 people located in various countries (including the Czech and Slovak republics, Hungary, Bulgaria and China) regarding an individual's definition of work. The majority of team members believed work should be defined "in terms of a social contribution" so that "everybody contributes according to his/her abilities to the benefit of the whole community."<sup>15</sup>

Backing up this research is another example where academics analyzed work design theory of "motivational, social and work context characteristics" from nearly 220,000 participants. Researchers analyzed 260 different academic studies and hundreds of mainstream media articles. They concluded, "Perhaps it should not be surprising that experienced meaningfulness is the best mediator of the relationships between

motivational characteristics and work outcomes.” Quite simply, if there is to be purpose in the work for team members, their output must benefit and have a positive impact on all stakeholders, including themselves. To underline the point, the researchers wrote, “The ultimate goal of human beings is to pursue meaning in our work and non-work lives.”<sup>16</sup>

I mentioned Dr. A. R. Elangovan of the University of Victoria earlier in this book. During one of our lunches, I asked Elango why purpose is so important to one’s role at work. “When someone’s role offers direction and criteria for making important decisions,” he said, “when it exposes us to the joys of continuous growth, sparks creativity, builds resilience toward setbacks, inspires a quest for excellence and leaves us with a sense of profound satisfaction, it makes the work-life balance issue moot and allows us to be fully and truly present at work.” He later added, “And when one can feel ‘so alive’ just being in a role with purpose, what more can one ask for?” Elango believes the authenticity that is rooted in such clarity of purpose motivates team members in their roles to greater effort and contributions.

Apple co-founder Steve Jobs delivered a commencement speech at Stanford University in 2005 that has been viewed several million times on YouTube. He closed his speech reminding us what was displayed on the back cover of the *The Whole Earth Catalog*’s final issue. It was a photograph of “an early morning country road” and the caption beneath read, “Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish.” Jobs urged the graduates of Stanford to do the same, as he had done in his life. Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish.

Tim Cook succeeded Jobs as CEO of Apple. He too delivered a commencement speech. In 2015—10 years after Jobs’ speech at Stanford—Cook spoke on the National Mall in Washington to graduates of George Washington University. Cook pleaded with the graduates to seek out a role and an organization “that’s infused with moral purpose” and to “find work that pays the rent, puts food on the table and lets you do what is right and good and just.” He suggested individuals did not have to choose “between doing good and doing well,” that work ought to be “about improving the lives of others.” He encouraged attendees to be impatient with progress, but perhaps more importantly he wanted graduates to be in a role full of purpose, passion and meaning. “Otherwise,” as he concluded, “it’s just a job, and life is too short for that.”<sup>17</sup>



Meaningful, positive and motivating work that improves the lives of others is indeed the purpose mindset of a role. I argue that Cook's commencement speech has far greater gravitas than what Jobs urged us to consider. Elangovan, Grant, Pink, Aaker and other researchers do not recommend team members stay hungry and foolish. On the contrary, they have proven that individuals who establish their purpose in work and elsewhere in their lives, have discovered an alignment between their role, their organization and themselves; one that provides a flourishing sense of meaning and worth in all of their actions. But it does not magically happen. The purpose mindset takes action. It takes leadership.

In 1990, at the age of 19, Brian Scudamore started a junk-removal business called The Rubbish Boys. "It was to pay for university," Brian divulged to me over an interview. With 11 employees and \$500,000 in revenues that year, Brian more than paid off his tuition fees with the start-up venture.

A few years later, The Rubbish Boys became 1-800-Got-Junk. His original partners did not understand the true purpose of being in business, so Brian dissolved The Rubbish Boys partnership and started anew. By 2015, Brian had successfully launched three more brands (O2E, Wow 1Day Paint, You Move Me) alongside 1-800-Got-Junk, employing more than 300 people at his headquarters while indirectly employing thousands of people across the globe working for franchise partners of Scudamore's empire. But the goal—after university tuition was paid for, of course—was not profit or revenues or success per se. The quest was purpose; it was about a meaningful life and place of work. Brian wanted his role to be a giving role, and equally important he wanted his team to feel the same way.

"I definitely have an entrepreneurial spirit," said Brian, "but I quickly realized my gift—my purpose—became the impact I could have on others and in the community. I always say, 'Make meaning not money' because when you have meaning in your life and you create a greater purpose for your company and society, you don't have to worry about a thing."

Brian does not believe money or power makes people happy, nor does he think it delivers any sense of purpose in one's role. "You need money for freedom and to make choices," he continued, "but look at Wall Street. There are a lot of people there living quarter-to-quarter, a lot of unhappy people who are not paying attention to the moments in life, making



connections with people or showing that they care. These types of people don't get that it's about making meaning not money."

Brian's organization is one that empowers its team members to "make the right decisions." Whether it is removing junk, painting houses or moving furniture, Brian believes the role of each team member is a manifestation of "doing good" in life, and in society. But interestingly, role purpose for the firm's team members (and Brian) actually comes not solely because everyone is empowered; it comes as a result of being able to contribute to a community.

"If you look at the definition of a company," he explained, "it's simply a gathering of great men and women working together. The term 'company' is more synonymous with the machine. I think of our organization and our team members more as a community, doing great things for people through roles that have been created to deliver a purpose."

The ultimate arbiter of alignment between an individual's personal purpose and an organization's purpose is for that team member to achieve a purpose mindset in their role. Leaders like Brian Scudamore and Tim Cook have come to the realization that when an individual performs in a role so that meaning and fulfillment is demonstrated, good things can happen for all stakeholders. After taking the reins from Jobs, Cook began investing in community outreach, volunteer programs and other forms of philanthropy as part of Apple's restated purpose. To reiterate Joseph Campbell, perhaps the purpose mindset is about the possibility of bliss at work. "If we treat people right in our organizations—in the community—who are then able to inspire others, the alignment is unmistakable and purpose in their role is easily attainable," Brian concluded.

When the purpose mindset in a role has been achieved, a distinct alignment between an individual's personal purpose and the organization's greater purpose is paramount. Without it, team members will end up in a job or career mindset greater than 50 percent of their time at work, pushing the sweet spot further out of reach. If these two mindsets materialize more often than not, then yes, Alain de Botton's point that work inculcates a bubble-like protection will ring true.

But when the purpose mindset is being demonstrated by large swathes of team members for a predominant portion of time in their roles, this is truly when the sweet spot forms and when community grows.

And when community grows, *communitas* is forged, the focus of our [next chapter](#).