

Why Do You Go To Work?

Why do you go to work? It seems a strange question. Many people will answer with 'I need to earn an income' or words to that effect. Whilst that is true, it is not necessarily what drives people to do their job. In fact, more and more people are looking for something other than money as a reward; and by that I don't mean some additional material or tangible item.

Consider this. Many of us leave school or university without a real idea of what job we want to do. Not everyone has a career in mind when they do their school exams or university degrees. Even if they do, it is not always an easy path to get into their desired career.

Hence, lots of us end up doing a job that we are not really that keen on. What happens then is that people feel disgruntled, dissatisfied, and simply go through the motions of day to day tasks. They work their "9 to 5" and collect their salary at the end of the month. This approach leads to poor engagement at work. People don't have a real reason to be there – except to be paid. As the low engagement continues, performance isn't good and relationships with colleagues suffer. Ultimately, people leave an organisation simply to find another 'mundane' job with a bit more money.

Surely there must be more to working than just getting paid.

Well, there is. Having a purpose – a reason to work other than just material reward. Described in his book "Start With Why", Simon Sinek explains that most of us live life by accident. If we have a 'WHY' we will live life 'on purpose'. And that mechanism can be applied to teams and organisations.

A Bit Of Context

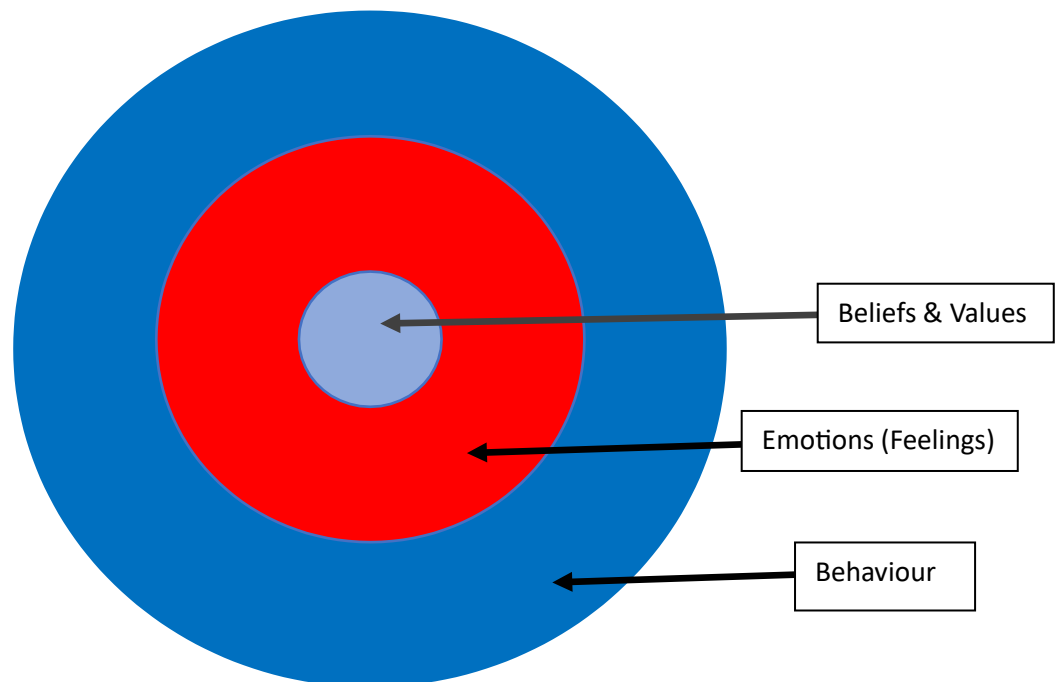
In everything we do, we use our beliefs and values and emotions to guide our behaviour. Our beliefs are deep seated and come from our experiences as we grow up. They come from those around us; those that influence us. Be they parents, extended family or other figures who appear in our lives as we develop our own views, opinions and beliefs.

The following model shows a simple three layer process. Given any situation we will have a belief or value which reflects our perspective. When that belief is 'triggered' we will have a feeling or emotion. That feeling will then elicit a behaviour or response. Simply following the model from the inside to the outside.

One of the key things to consider here is that our beliefs are deep seated, yet given the definition of a belief, they may not necessarily be true! Nevertheless, our emotion will still be created. These emotions are derived in the primitive part of our brain, and we have no control over them. Yes, we can manage our emotions – not control them. In other words, we cannot stop them from happening. What we can do is to understand how we feel and respond (behave) appropriately and productively.

Everything we do in our lives follows this process; indeed, our behaviour will often reinforce the belief and emotion so that the behaviour is emphasised or repeated. So, what does this have to do with the workplace, purpose and why we go to work? Good question.

The 'Belief – Emotion – Behaviour' Model



Belief is defined as an acceptance that something exists or is true, especially one without proof

Emotion can be defined as a strong feeling deriving from one's circumstances, mood, or relationships with others or instinctive or intuitive feeling as distinguished from reasoning or knowledge

Behaviour is the way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially towards others in response to a situation or stimulus.

Purpose in the Workplace

In his research, Simon Sinek recognised something that has been known for a long time. That the Belief – Emotion – Behaviour model plays out at work. His book explains that if we understand 'WHY' we do what we do at work, rather than just 'WHAT' we do, people will be more engaged. The title of his book gives it away really. He notes his research simply allowed this model to be 'unpacked'.

Let's go into more detail. If a person in your team or organisation knows why they are doing their job, it becomes a belief. If they **do** believe in why they are doing the job, then they have a set of positive emotions. Positive emotions lead to positive behaviours.

In other words. If we were to take the model shown and replace BELIEF with WHY, then the cascade continues to emotion and behaviour – or WHAT we do.

In many teams and organisations, finding a WHY or Purpose is pivotal to changing the degree of engagement and positive behaviours in the workplace. It is also true that some people when going through a process to identify a team purpose, recognise they may be in the wrong job. If they do not believe in the purpose of the team or business, they cannot possibly have positive emotions and behaviours.

Don't Objectives Drive Behaviour?

Traditionally, all good outcomes start with objectives. Surely then, objectives drive behaviour. Indeed, they do. However, they drive behaviour which is towards a tangible outcome. Such as profit or growth or market share or number of client engagements etc.

Having a purpose is not a replacement for objectives. It changes the way in which objectives are delivered.

For example – If a team member has an objective to enter a certain amount of data into a database by a certain time in order to achieve a deadline for client payment; they will do that. They may not know anything more than the data to enter and the date by which it must be completed. A mundane task.

If the team member has this same objective yet understands their purpose – or WHY they are completing the data entry, there is a different approach. It becomes a mundane task *with* a valid and valuable reason for completing the data entry which is understood by the person doing the work. There is more motivation, with a good reason to complete it accurately and on time.

Purpose Examples and Use

A purpose is for internal use. It is there to make people feel that they have a sense of belonging and a reason to get out of bed and go to work. A purpose is not designed to be a marketing tool. Although some organisations may choose to use it as such. A well thought through and implemented purpose is a very powerful method to get engagement in the workplace. In the same way as not having one is increasingly a powerful way of having low performance and engagement.

In recent years, I have been involved with the creation of some excellent purposes. These have been designed through full engagement of team members. A purpose should be short, meaningful and easy to recall. It must reflect the belief of all in the team that what they do has meaning and positive 'social impact'. Purposes are not lengthy statements with complicated words. They are made of a few words or a sentence at most.

Take Simon Sinek's own purpose

'We are here to inspire people to do the things that inspire them so that, together, each of us can change our world for the better.'

– probably one of the longer purpose statements I have encountered.

Other examples include –

“We Make You Successful”

“We Facilitate Opportunity”

“We Make Business Better”

“We Innovate, We Connect, We Value”

One which is used by a major pharmaceutical company has been used more as a global marketing phrase. Perfectly acceptable, although remember, not the primary reason for having a purpose. It is

“Breakthroughs That Change Patients Lives”

There are many others – none of which will fit with your team or organisation. If you do want to create a purpose, it needs to be a facilitated process that elicits the correct information and has the right context and meaning for you.

So, what is your team’s WHY?

*Malcolm Dawes is the Managing Director of dta Worldwide and is the most sought-after authority on people performance and effectiveness. He has worked with businesses globally to advise them on effectively managing change in the workplace. He is a renowned expert in helping people to increase their interaction effectiveness through behavioural change. In his book ‘**Team Performance: Why Can’t We All get Along?**’, Malcolm explores the 10 myths of creating high performance teams. For a copy of Malcolm’s book, free of charge contact Malcolm at:*

malcolm@dtaworldwide.com

+61 1300 561 369

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/leadershipdevelopmentworldwide/>

www.dtaworldwide.com