

# Learning to Thrive



WHIRLING CHIEF



## Introduction

In the US, there are approximately 100 million people employed full time, with a mere **30% of them considered engaged**<sup>1</sup> in their work. Of those, **50% are “kind of present”** and not inspired by their work or their managers.<sup>2</sup> **20% are actively disengaged.**<sup>2</sup>

Worldwide, we have approximately 3 billion people employed full time and shockingly fewer – only about **13% of them! – are engaged.**<sup>1</sup>

**The cost of disengaged workers reported in America alone is \$450-550 million a year!**<sup>3</sup>

**It is time we shift the paradigm of the work experience.**

## What is ‘Thriving,’ Anyway?

In medicine, there is a condition pertaining to infants and the frail elderly, known as ‘failure to thrive.’ A ‘failure to thrive’ diagnosis is denoted by an acute lack of growth and manifests itself in listlessness, immobility, apathy, and a lack of appetite (Bakwin, 1949).

We draw on the work of Spreitzer et al. (2005) to define thriving as ‘the psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and a sense of learning at work.’ Vitality refers to the positive feeling of having energy available (Nix et al., 1999). ‘Learning’ refers to the sense that one is acquiring, and can apply, knowledge and skills.

**For us at Whirling Chief, ‘Thrive’ is about feeling alive, energetic, motivated, and inspired!**

It is not, however, a dichotomous state. Thriving is a continuum, where people are experiencing a certain sensation at a given time. It is more of a psychological state that’s subject to change, and not an individual disposition. Individuals’ thriving is malleable and shaped by their work context. Depending on a person’s work context, he or she can experience thriving as increasing, decreasing, or constant in comparison to the person’s thriving at a previous point in time.

## Why Does It Matter?

We believe organizations thrive in growth, productivity, and innovation when individuals working inside those organizations thrive.

There are several reasons why an individual’s work experience matters:

**Self-development:** The number one reason why employees feel ‘stuck’ at work is their sense or feeling of lack of self-development. The organizational focus on ‘Thrive’ creates opportunities for individuals to develop self-awareness, self-control, and self-actualization skills, which in return feeds the organization in increased engagement numbers.



**Health:** According to NIOSH, 40% of workers reported their job was very or extremely stressful, and job stress is more strongly associated with health complaints than financial or family problems. By 2030, the World Health Organization has predicted that the single leading cause of disability, globally, will be depression. It also goes without saying that individuals focusing more on the areas of life they care most about – even if those areas are unrelated to work – will perform better at their jobs.<sup>4</sup>

**Performance:** Across industries and job types, we found that people who fit our description of thriving demonstrated 16% better overall performance (as reported by their managers) and 125% less burnout (self-reported) than their peers. They were 32% more committed to the organization and 46% more satisfied with their jobs<sup>5</sup>

**Contagion to Others:** Did you know if a manager is feeling stressed, low energy, or depressed in the workplace – even if the team doesn't know anything about it! – the team's collective blood pressure levels go up? <sup>6</sup>

## What to Focus On?

In his research on work motivation, Dan Ariely found three measures which we feel summarize the focus areas for engagement very well: <sup>7</sup>

### 1. Autonomy

Empowerment is widely talked about and, yet, we continue to forget one key value underneath: **Trust!**

A high level of empowerment can be achieved by implementing simple procedures in an organization but, in essence, they need to enable a capacity for decision making and room for iterations. Though it has been proven time and again that “delegation authority causes improvement of an employee's performance,” we simply ignore the fact in practice. <sup>8,9</sup>

**If we truly want our employees to feel empowered, we need to build the right environment for them to work authentically.**

### 2. Mastery

58% of managers feel they give enough feedback, yet 65% of employees say they want more. A study of over 2,000 employees by Gallup, for example, found that 69% of employees prefer praise and recognition from their managers over monetary rewards.

If we want to enhance people's work experience and enable them to do their best in the workplace, **we need to shift our focus to intrinsic motivation factors such as learning opportunities, feedback sharing, collaboration, and connection.**



### 3. Purpose

Globally, 15% of employees believe their corporate strategy is wrong, and almost 1-in-3 receive no information on how to even execute that strategy. Managers feel no different: Only 61 percent are convinced that their strategic initiatives are staffed with the right people.<sup>10</sup> We have great visions, and yet we struggle to make them 'meaningful' for front line workers. **There is a need for us to tighten strategy and strategy execution.**

## How to Create a Thriving Organization?

Individual thriving is an important means through which people self-regulate their own growth, but we need to thrive collectively as well if we wish to achieve organizational success.

Understanding what it means to be human, knowing one's self, and growing skills around the expression of one's self is a baseline to leadership development and the ability to manage and lead thriving organizations and change.

**At Whirling Chief, we offer a variety of great development curriculums that focus on the following aspects:**



For more information, please contact us at [whirlingchief@gmail.com](mailto:whirlingchief@gmail.com)

#### SOURCES:

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