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## RYP QUARTERLY

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# The Power that Progress has on Employee Morale

*Of all the things that can boost staff morale – The Number one is Progress (and the feeling it generates). This may sound like Management 101 or common sense, but too often it is forgotten or just ignored. A sense of Progress requires deliberate intent by a Leader, not Platitudes.*

Imagine never being thanked or acknowledged for the work you do. Imagine never feeling you have reached an important milestone or tasted team achievement.

Sound odd? For too many workers this is the norm.

In countless climate surveys after countless exit interviews, the same symptom is reported – Poor Management presides to a poor culture. A lack of recognition or appreciation by a manager for their staff always fosters feelings of resentment, being undervalued, or not feeling they are a respected team member. So, guess what? Staff get an attitude of indifference and leave! Poor staff feedback results always highlight poor managers!

***Incompetent Managers Are Merely in Charge of Today.  
Competent Managers Fuel a Sense of Progress and Achievement.***

### THE POWER OF PROGRESS

**A sense of progress fuels inner emotions. It has a huge impact on creativity, confidence, and productivity.** Small consistent steps forward accumulate into Excellent Execution. A Feeling of Progress cannot be prescribed or mandated by a leader. Neither can it be taught or inducted into people. **It is something overseen and indoctrinated into the team culture by line Managers.**

**Progress is fundamental to the psyche of human nature – but few managers understand this, and worse, know how to leverage it to boost motivation and morale.** Managers who are fixated on what is wrong, or the next current urgent issue to address, rarely have engaged, motivated or passionate staff.

**Employee motivation has been the subject of long-standing debate.** In research conducted by Amabile & Kramer (reported in the May 2011 HBR Review) they found that very few managers ranked a feeling of progress as the number one motivator of staff (which it is).



Most placed recognition, tangible incentives, clear goals, and interpersonal support above progress.

**The quality of a person's inner work life (emotionally how they feel about work) has a huge impact on motivation, decision-making, attitudes, creative thinking, commitment to a team, and a worker's overall perception of the workplace.**

***Happy workers are motivated.  
Unhappy workers have an attitude of indifference to the workplace.***

### **A SENSE OF PROGRESS IS SHAPED AND MUST ACCUMULATE**

**For a sense of Progress to be deemed authentic, it must:**

- ✓ Accumulate Over Time
- ✓ Be Measured
- ✓ Be Experienced – Felt by The Team and Individual
- ✓ Be Observable and Apparent to Others
- ✓ Be Meaningful to the Organisation
- ✓ Be Acknowledged and Recognised by Leaders

**Progress is an accumulation of the many small things people and teams do day in and day out.** It requires team commitment, persistence, and perseverance. These are behavioural characteristics overseen and coached by direct line Managers.

**Like Trust – a sense of Progress slowly accumulates via the behaviours, mindsets, actions, and symbolic rituals overseen and enforced by a Leader and implemented by the team.**

When you think about Progress – people often focus on achieving huge long-term goals or breakthrough achievements. However, small wins and achievements can boost inner confidence and fuel powerful emotions including a sense of fulfilment, achievement, pride, being valued, and engagement.

**A feeling of progress helps release positive hormones** (dopamine – feel-good hormone & serotonin – regulates emotions). These need regular releases to help build a positive inner feeling about work.

**There will always be small losses and setbacks.** However, a positive sense of achievement and confidence will help build resilience and an ability to adequately deal with setbacks.

***How a person's inner self (gut feelings) on a Sunday Evening about work on Monday is a pretty accurate reflection of the Team Culture they work in***



## **WHAT HAPPENS ON A GOOD OR BAD DAY IS A REFLECTION OF CULTURE**

**What happens on a good day or bad day reflects team culture. What does the leader do? What does the team do? How a good or bad day is acknowledged, measured, and recognised will have a huge impact on the inner feelings and morale of the team.**

**Setbacks happen.** Not every day can be a good day. Not every season or year can be a good one. But a team's ability to rebound and recover will be based on the learnt behaviours, mindsets, and team rituals overseen by the Leaders. **How the leader acts and behaves is key. This requires self-awareness.**

**When a Team Has a Good Day or Makes Progress** how a Leader acknowledges, recognises, and celebrates is key. Little milestones and incremental improvements can have just a powerful impact on the psyche and morale of the team as a huge momentous achievement. The worst thing a Leader can do is ignore it – or simply pay lip service to it. The latter always leads to feelings of frustration, confusion, and apathy (what is the point of trying to achieve excellence if it is not appreciated).

**When a Team Has a Bad Day or has a Setback**, how the Team and Leader responds is key. Engaging the team to share thoughts and ideas on how to respond, and reset goals and actions, whilst encouraging the team to innovate and problem-solve is where the power of teamwork can be brought to life and practised by a Leader. However, if the Leader gets angry, apports blame, thumps the table and demands improvements without offering assistance – it is the surest way of dragging team morale down further and demoralising the team.

***After a bad day at work – it is important for the team to come together – reset short-term goals – assure and support one another to foster a sense of unity, and a sense that “we are all in this together.” How a team does this reflects the Cultural DNA of the Team and the Character of the Leader***

## **PROGRESS MUST HAVE A SENSE OF MEANING**

**Making progress boosts confidence, job satisfaction, and self-esteem – but only if it is meaningful.** No matter the role, no matter the type of work, people must have a sense that what they are doing is meaningful and important to the overall success of the team – no matter how menial the task is.

**Success is made up of many small wins.** A school crossing supervisor is often the first touch any student or parent has walking into a school. A smile or pat on the back will help engender a positive learning environment. The dishwashers at a busy restaurant can add to the positive vibe and productivity in the kitchen by being happy, supportive, and efficient to ensure the kitchen is clean and functional. Everyone can make a difference. Everyone can add value. **But it is up to the Leader to provide meaningful feedback, recognition and gratitude for a job well done – and publicly express how a person has added to the team.**



**One More Time What Motivates People?  
A Sense of Progress, Achievement, and the Recognition For Achievement**

**HOW TO LEAD PROGRESS (THE POSITIVE SHAPING PRINCIPLE)**

**When it comes to motivating staff, it does not take much to send a positive message.** An act as simple as thanking someone for the work they are doing, or praising someone publicly for achieving something has a tremendous impact on employee morale. The psychology behind this is quite clear – Positive Feedback helps employees feel valued.

**The things done or not done by a manager will have clear implications on employee motivation, well-being, morale, productivity, and creativity.** Positive shaping is the incremental things done day in and day out by a manager that helps build an employee’s Confidence, Competence, and Commitment. It is important to constantly reinforce how their contributions add and make a difference to the team’s success.

**A Manager will either inflate team morale and motivate staff or negate and deflate staff confidence and morale by how they lead progress, or not!**

**FACT**  
***People are most satisfied with their job (and thus motivated) when their job gives them an opportunity to achieve, autonomy, recognition***

WHAT MOTIVATES EMPLOYEES	WHAT DEMOTIVATES EMPLOYEES
1. A Sense of Achievement	1. A Toxic Manager
2. Recognition For Achievement	2. A Disengaged Team
3. A Sense of Autonomy	3. Unnecessary Bureaucracy
4. Being Valued and Respected	4. Being Micromanaged
5. Having Their Voice and Opinions Heard	5. A Culture of Compliance
6. Be Included in The Team	6. Burdensome Administration
7. Being Thanked for Volunteerism	7. Workplace Politics
8. Being Treated as An Equal	8. Favouritism By a Manager
9. Feeling Part of Something Special	9. Hiring the Wrong People
10. Alignment With the Team Purpose	10. Promoting the Wrong People
11. Personal Feedback on Jobs Done Well	11. An Absent Leader (Do Nothing)
12. Leaders Role Model Desired Values	12. Commitments Not Followed Through
13. Transparency On Communications	13. No Sense of Career Progression
14. Prompt Closure on Feedback Loops	14. Feedback Loops not Closed Off
15. Managers Who Are Interested in Them	15. Leaders Tolerating Toxic Staff
16. Opportunities For Learning	16. Platitudes rather than Actions
17. Opportunities For Career Progression	17. Apathetic demotivated Managers
18. Having Sufficient Resources	18. Insufficient Resources
19. Meaningful Work	19. Unclear Permissions & Authorities
20. Team Rituals That Engage the Team	20. No Structured Team Cadence



***Leaders must find time to stop and thank the people who are making a difference to our lives.***

***- John F Kennedy***

### **FINAL MESSAGE TO LEADERS**

**Progress is fundamental to human nature. When people have positive thoughts about their work, they are more motivated, creative, and productive.** Whether you are a Front-Line Leader with a few staff, or a CEO with thousands of staff, the principles are the same. If you need a climate survey to gauge how engaged and motivated your staff are, then you are clearly not close to or in tune with your team. There are clear observable signals when Teams and Staff are motivated including:

- ✓ A Positive Energy in The Team
- ✓ A Sense of Enthusiasm
- ✓ A Willingness to Innovate And Problem Solve
- ✓ A Sense of Fun in The Team
- ✓ Team Rituals and Celebration Triggers That Are Observed By All Team Members
- ✓ Low Absenteeism and Staff Turnover
- ✓ Clear Observable Goals and Team Success Measures That Matter
- ✓ An Ability and Expectation for All Team Members To Proactively Predict And See Issues And Act On Them Before They Get Away
- ✓ The Ability and Autonomy To Solve Problems And Make Decisions (Rather Than Merely Reporting Them Or Escalating Them To A Higher Authority)
- ✓ An Obvious Passion for The Organisation and Its Purpose

#### **Two Quotes from Two Historical Leaders:**

***1. Without a feeling of continual growth and progress – words such as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning.***

*Benjamin Franklin*

***2. Without training they lacked knowledge. Without knowledge they lacked confidence. Without confidence they lacked victory. Without victory they lacked commitment***

*Julius Caesar*

#### ***Facta Non Verba – Deeds Not Words***

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