



POSITIVE WORKPLACE ALLIANCE

Powerful Performances, with Positive Psychology

Jocelyn S. Davis

Positive Psychology, a relatively new field focusing on how people flourish, offers us a great opportunity to create workplaces where good work can be done well.

Positive Psychology, P2 hereafter, is the brainchild of Martin E.P. Seligman of the University of Pennsylvania. He --- along with Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, Christopher Peterson, and others both current and past --- considers the optimum conditions for we humans to do well.

Just think about it!

Instead of anguishing about what weaknesses we need to be constantly vigilant to spot and correct in ourselves (occasionally) and in others (constantly), we could focus instead on what we each do well.

And, then do more of it!

Now, imagine that P2 is backed by solid, empirical science; such that P2 can make a solid business case for why changing the workplace to a *positive workplace* is really good business. And, this positive workplace improvement is not only better for us spending time there, but also for improving the bottom line of our business.

Positive psychology offers improvements in the bottom line measured through key business drivers such as productivity, profitability, customer loyalty, retention, worker health, reduction in safety incidents and theft, reduction in absenteeism, among others.

I have to say that I wish that I'd had a P2 framework earlier in my career. In some ways, I did.

Strengths Focus -

I intuitively understood that the key to really great staffing is not to find the right person for the job, but the right job for the person.



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This is really the strengths-focused approach in P2 rather than our traditional focus on weakness correction.

Both the Gallup Organization and Seligman and Peterson have models and assessment tools to identify strengths in individuals that are applicable to the workplace. Seligman and Peterson's model, the VIA Inventory of Strengths (www.authentic happiness.com), however, identifies an individual's character strengths and not just work skills.

Using your strengths, and creating an environment where others use theirs, yields better work results. Check out the research!

Optimism is another element of P2.

Optimism has to do with the fundamental approach an individual has to adverse circumstances. Interestingly, it looks, based on early research, as if optimism can be built by the conscious effort of the individual.

Optimism has proven positive impact on health, immune system function, creativity, productivity, and accuracy of complex thinking.

It may well be a key part of the competitive advantage all businesses are seeking. Optimism allows us to capitalize on the 'wins' and persevere in the face of losses or setbacks.

Wouldn't you love to have more optimists in your workplace?
Wouldn't you just love to have them in charge of your most difficult projects?

Engagement is the product of primary research by the Gallup Organization.

Engagement is a deceptively simple concept. Workplaces that score well on a 12 item assessment have high engagement. High engagement yields employees who are delighted to be at work and are engaged with the work of the work. They are self-motivated.



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Only a small part of the US Workforce is engaged by this definition and a lack of engagement in the US workplace is estimated by Gallup to cost \$300 billion annually and another \$1 trillion annually when the indirect costs are included. This is nearly 10% of US GDP.

Knowing the fundamentals of engagement is 'key' to improving the workplace.

Solutions Focus -

Most of the time, we managers and leaders are focused on identifying and solving problems, if not on anticipating problems.

The fact is we find what we look for. So, if we define good leadership as problem solving or even problem avoidance, our focus is on problems. The more we find or avert, the better we are at our job.

P2 suggests that a solutions focus is really a better way to go. What if we look for solutions? What will we find?

What I've found is a better - and better appreciated - way to be a leader!
Positive Psychology brings us

Strengths and strengths-based management

Optimism

Engagement

Solutions focus

... and really positive leadership. Leadership with positive results for the bottom line -- and for the people who produce it.

Now that's positive leadership!

Well, that's my opinion anyway.

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