

How to increase employee productivity and performance with Workplace Innovation

Boosting the performance of employees and teams have always been a constant challenge for managers and HR professionals, but the scope of challenges have taken a huge shift in the last few decades.

The changing world of work



Image source: Docplayer.nl

The late 20th century was a period of major social, economic and political changes. It was the beginning of the so-called 'Knowledge Age', and if we look at the 21st century, recent developments have been:

- The economic crisis and the budgetary constraints
- Social changes, such as an aging workforce or the breakdown of traditional gender roles
- Technological innovation
- Knowledge-based work
- Globalisation

Through these developments, professional roles, responsibilities, and even the core

definition of our 'work' has changed. For example:

- Jobs are now more in the service sector
- The technology involved in performing jobs are more sophisticated
- There is a need for more customer orientation

To cater to all of these, employees need to be willing to change and learn. So to improve performance in today's world, it is critical to increase the connection that employees feel to their work.

A study by The McKinsey Global Institute shows that productivity improves by 20-25% in organisations with connected employees. Employees who are motivated, find pleasure in their work. A similar study by Gallup indicated that employees who are engaged in their work are 27% more likely to report 'excellent' performance.

However, despite these drastic changes and developments, in the majority of the organisations, old structures and traditional management concepts are still in place. These concepts are no longer being able to cater to the new mindset and lives of the professionals, and this results in more burn-outs and drained employees.

And this is where Workplace Innovation comes in.

What is Workplace Innovation exactly?

"IMAGINE...

Imagine a workplace where people are energised and motivated by being in control of the work they do.

Imagine they are trusted and given freedom, within clear guidelines, to decide how to achieve their results.

Imagine they are able to get the life balance they want.

Imagine they are valued and held accountable for the work that they do, rather than the time they spend at their desk.

Wouldn't you want to work there?"

-'The Happy Manifesto', by Henry Stewart

Workplace Innovation is the way in which organisations divide the work that is performed in different jobs.

It is an organisational model which explicitly focuses on new methods of improving the working environment, to help employees work in a way that brings out the best in their capabilities and helps them work, perform, and live better.

The key objective of Workplace Innovation is to improve the motivation, engagement, and performance of employees. It aims at giving back energy and pleasure in work.

Work psychology approaches refer to 'motivation' as a property of the person. So motivation, (or the lack of it) is inherent in the nature of jobs.

This means that we need to look less closely at the person and more closely at what it is about work that can make it motivating.

How does Workplace Innovation really work?

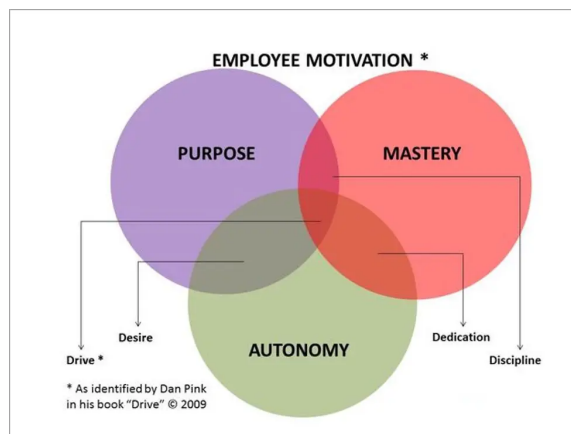
Some (social) scientists and psychologists have examined different models to explain how optimising the work model can drive performance:

1. The self-driven approach model by Daniel Pink

Drawing on four decades of scientific research on human motivation, career analyst Dan Pink exposes the mismatch between what science knows and what business does—and how that affects every aspect of our lives.

He demonstrates that while the old-fashioned carrot-and-stick approach worked successfully in the 20th century, it's precisely the wrong way to motivate people for today's challenges.

The fundamental principle of this model is that high performance and satisfaction in today's world is the deeply human need to direct our own lives, to learn and create new things, and to do better by ourselves and our world. He reveals the three elements of true motivation:

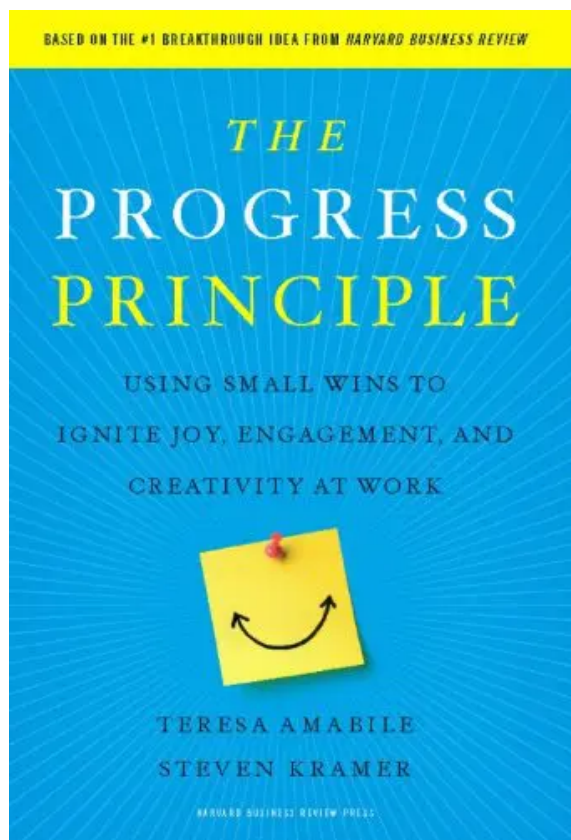


- **Autonomy** is the basic human need to direct our own lives. Do you need a boss

micromanaging you and telling you how to do your job? Neither do your employees. They want to own their work.

- **Mastery** is the urge to get better and better at something that matters, to learn and create new things. Given the freedom to explore (new) ways to improve your work, employees learn and become better and better in your job.
- **Purpose** is the yearning to do what we do in the service of something larger than ourselves, to do better by ourselves and our world. When you and your team have a purpose, you work for not only the better of your organization, but also for your own fulfillment. And that motivation by default enhance your performance.

2. The Progress Principle by Teresa Amabile



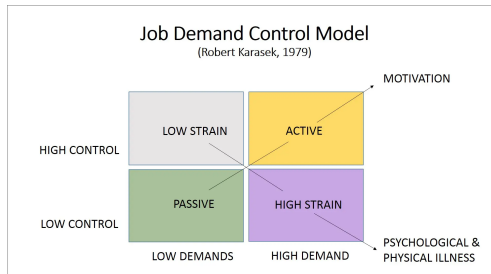
‘The Progress Principle’ states that more than incentives through bonuses and acknowledgement by bosses, progress in meaningful work is the single greatest factor when it comes to creating high functioning teams and work environments. Work progress serves as a trigger for positive perceptions, emotions, and motivations. This creates a virtuous feedback loop, greatly increasing performance.

3. The Job Demand Control Model by Robert Karasek

can actually bring in your workplace, to create those elements?

There could be different aspects of innovation:

- The organisational structure: Flat organization, multi-disciplinary and self organised teams
- Human Resources Management: More autonomy, roles and not jobs, different skills and competences are needed, coaching leadership
- Relationships with clients and suppliers: More customer-oriented, less supply-oriented, and more demand-oriented
- The work environment itself: Flexible work, distance working, creativity rooms



In this model the key factor to motivate employees, reduce their stress, and thus improve performance, is the structure and culture of an organisation. It is possible for organisations to create “active workplaces” that allow learning and managing work stress.

1. Job demands: The extent to which a job involves more complexity (diversity of tasks based on the skills).
2. Autonomy & self-regulation: The freedom the employee has to make choices and decisions him (or her)self or in team. This autonomy leads to challenging and ‘active jobs’.

These were just a few examples to show that the new world needs a new approach to work motivation and work design, entirely different than the traditional concepts of motivation.

How can you implement Workplace Innovation in your organisation?

Now that you have an idea of what elements can drive employee engagement in today’s world, the question is, what are the changes that you

Peter Totterdill is a firm believer of creating innovation in participative ways of working. He urges organisations to encourage open dialogue, knowledge sharing, and experimentation in learning. To create empowering, collaborative workplace environments which enable employees to use their knowledge, competences, and creativity to the full.

Mieke van Gramberen, Director of Flanders Synergy, presents the case for designing new structures of organisations, where people can unearth their true talents and thus find pleasure in their work. Through various case studies, she also shows how self-managed and autonomous teams can actually enhance organisation growth.

Innovation expert Jef Staes advocates the need to move to a 3D world. The extra dimension of the workplace that organisations need to add, of employees actually leveraging their talent and passion to do their work better. He urges organisations how to stop the ‘sheep’ mindset of people and move to the ‘smart’ one. Check out his inspiring talk at TedXflanders <https://youtu.be/QOy71B-P3nk>

Conclusion

Organisations have been spending millions on introducing innovation in operations, processes, products and services, but eventually what makes it all happen and drive growth in an organisation are the people.

Organisations that choose workplace innovation are more productive and show sustainable growth.

So it is time that business took note of all the research, and the science of how people feel happy and committed to their work. It is time to make that strategic choice to bring in innovation in work. To make 3D switch and get to a win-win

situation: make your people happy, and drive organisational growth.

For more insights from experts on how organisations can implement Workplace Innovation to drive performance, case studies of how some organisations are actually getting significant growth from introducing these changes, and how you can do that for your team and organisation too, with practical examples, check out our upcoming seminar.