

Living your purpose

Purpose brings out the best in humanity- it is the contribution we make, the impact we have and the legacy we leave. We are not at our best as innocent bystanders, but rather as active participants in making this a better place with broader opportunities for others. Finding purpose is uniquely personal and can be expressed as a passion for delivering outcomes for patients, or customers, or clients, or colleagues, or company or even the community itself. The leaders' challenge is to show how personal purpose can be aligned and brought to life through a collective purpose.

Individual purpose is especially important in a crisis, or in times of crisis, as a guidepost through uncertainty and stress. What people find meaningful can shift especially during life changing events

It's much easier to be authentic at work when there is a close alignment between organizational and personal values. Individual purpose is an overarching sense of what matters in our lives and we feel purposeful when we strive towards something personally meaningful or valued. Purposeful work and life bring enduring benefits in and of themselves and contribute to whole of life resilience, wellbeing and performance.

Harnessing the power of purpose

At its essence, a company's purpose is why it exists and its core reason for being. Purpose is an organization's "why" and lies at the intersection of two fundamental questions: "What are our authentic and distinctive strengths as a company?" and "What human need do we fulfill?" An inspiring purpose is less about products and services and more about community impact and benefit. Similarly, the leaders who stand out are those who stand for something with greater meaning and a deeper purpose than just doing the job – it is what the job enables them to deliver that is the key.

Purpose also provides a "true north" in times of uncertainty and volatility and builds the resilience necessary to deal with the inevitable "ups and downs" that happen not only in one's professional life but also across all aspects of an integrated life. Purpose also builds deeper engagement in workplace culture and increasingly attracts a workforce who are wanting not only a good job but one that delivers a greater social good.

Discussions in bringing purpose to life in your team

1. Company purpose – how would you describe it in simple terms, for example to someone in your family.
2. Personal purpose – what matters most in the work you do and has most meaning and value for you.
3. Team purpose – how we define the success of the team in terms of the benefits delivered to others. The team purpose is the value delivered collectively above and beyond what could be delivered alone.
4. Embedding purpose – what we stand for as a team and truly commit to as individuals in enshrining purpose in our systems and processes, ways of working and personal behaviour.
5. Aligning purpose – the challenge is to make sure that purpose statements are not simply generic words, but are personal, authentic and connected. A superficial approach to purpose does more harm than good.

Questions to consider

1. How can we make purpose central to our "way of being" and "way of doing"?
2. When you can articulate a purpose do you feel you are living it?
3. Do you ever stop to consider how your sense of purpose might be better met at work??
4. How has your experience this year changed the way you think about purpose?
5. Most people say they have a purpose when asked, but often find it difficult to articulate. Is this true?

Igniting individual purpose in times of crisis (handout)

1. Be personal – individual purpose is an overarching sense of what matters in our lives and we feel purposeful when we strive towards something personally meaningful
2. Where to start – start simply with open, honest and thoughtful conversations with your team about what individuals want from their work and what it contributes to the lives they lead
3. Start the conversation – to discover more about people, how they are doing, what matters most to them and what support they might need
4. Make personal reflection a business priority – reflect on alignment of personal and business purpose and sharing a purpose with others helps to clarify it and bring it to life more fully
5. Help people take action – ignite the human spirit to act in bringing a greater sense of purpose to the lives they lead
6. Reimagine a purpose led future – embedding purpose in the employee experience from recruiting, induction to performance management and development