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Recrafting Work: A Model for Workplace Engagement and Meaning

Gordon H. Parry

University of Pennsylvania, gordon.parry@aristotlegroup.net

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Abstract

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Keywords

job re-crafting, engagement, job, career, calling

Running head: ENGAGEMENT AND MEANING IN THE WORKPLACE

Recrafting Work: A Model for Workplace Engagement and Meaning

Gordon H. Parry

University of Pennsylvania

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Abstract

The global knowledge based economy, technological and information advances, and expanding complexity, are transforming the work place. Worldwide, less than a third of employees are actively engaged, the majority unengaged, and a significant portion actively disengaged. Work represents nearly half of waking life for most adults and has been identified as an important domain for authentic happiness. A model is provided to guide employees through the process of recrafting work to align with signature strengths with the goal of moving along the job, career, calling continuum. A description of the model, the empirical basis for the process and tools embedded in the model and results of a pilot implementation in a Fortune 250 global information services company are reviewed.

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The Changing Workplace

Demographic shifts, a “flatter world” through continued globalization, new technologies, and evolution to a knowledge economy are having a dramatic impact on the workplace. By 2008, significant skills and experience will begin to disappear from the job market. The first wave of the *Baby Boom* generation will turn 62, the average retirement age in the developed economies of North America, Europe, and Asia. Over the next 15 years, 80% of workforce growth will occur among people 50 years or older. By 2050, 40% of Europe’s total population will be age 60 or older (Deloitte, 2004). Deloitte identifies four industries in particular that will experience challenges in filling critical positions: health care, manufacturing, energy, and the public sector. “The Australian health care system, for example expects 31,000 vacancies to go unfilled by 2006. The United States sees a shortage of more than 1 million nurses by the year 2012. More than 80% of U.S. manufacturers face a shortage of qualified machinists, craft workers, and technicians. Likewise, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that more than 300,000 of the 1.3 million new IT jobs to be created between 1996 and 2006 will go unfilled” (Deloitte, 2004). The realities of the global talent market, punctuates the need for organizations to begin addressing employee engagement, and development.

“The shift from an agriculture or industrial economy to a knowledge-based economy carries profound implications for the workforce. The workforce’s level of knowledge and skills, its flexibility and responsiveness, the ability of its members to work in teams – all of these are raised to new and higher levels in the knowledge-based economy” (Judy, 2002). “This new knowledge economy will rely heavily on knowledge workers. At present, this term is widely used to describe people with considerable theoretical knowledge and learning, but the most

striking growth will be in knowledge technologists. Just as unskilled manual workers in manufacturing were the dominant social and political force in the 20th century, knowledge technologists are likely to become the dominant social and perhaps also political force over the next decades” (Drucker, 2001). The knowledge economy will require changes in the ways organizations manage their human resources, leaders are trained, and success is measured.

Two specific aspects of the knowledge economy profoundly impact the workplace. The first is the explosion of information. The second is complexity where more decisions are required more frequently with increasing interconnectivity. Bill Jensen in his book *Simplicity* indicates that, using the most conservative estimates, business information doubles every three years. Put another way, “at least every 1,100 days, your ability to translate information into work becomes twice as important” (Jensen, 2000).

This growing complexity produces choices and decisions that can be overwhelming. “The success of modernity turns out to be bittersweet, and everywhere we look it appears that a significant contributing factor is the overabundance of choice. Having too many choices produces psychological distress, especially when combined with regret, concern about status, adaptation, social comparison, and perhaps most important, the desire to have the best of everything – to maximize” (Schwartz, 2004).

New technologies are redefining where, how, and by whom work is performed. The *Information Revolution* has boosted productivity, but those gains have not translated into a decrease in the workweek. In the United States, “over 31% of college-educated male workers are regularly logging 50 or more hours a week at work, up from 22% in 1980. About 40% of American adults get less than seven hours of sleep on weekdays, up from 34% in 2001. 25% of executives at large companies say their communications – voice mail, e-mail, and meetings – are

completely unmanageable, with nearly 40% spending half to a full day per week on communications (Mandel, 2005). A study conducted by American Online in 2000 found that 47% of subscribers took their laptop computers on vacation and 26% continued to check e-mail every day.

Overwork is not isolated to the United States. In their book, *The Power of Full Engagement*, Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz document the problem of overwork in Japan. In 1987, the Japanese Ministry of Labor began to publish statistics on *karoshi*, translated as death from overwork. Over 10,000 deaths in Japan have been attributed to *karoshi*, and research shows that there are five key factors: 1) extremely long hours that interfere with normal recovery and rest patterns, 2) night work that interferes with normal recovery and rest periods, 3) working without holidays or breaks, 4) high-pressure work without breaks, and 5) extremely demanding physical labor and continuously stressful work. The number of workers in Japan who worked more than 60 hours per week increased from 15% of the workforce in 1975 to 24% in 1988. The authors indicated that no comparable research or consequences of overwork exist in the U.S., but America is the only country in the world in which employees work more hours per week than the Japanese (Loehr, 2003). “There are signs that global competition is forcing Europeans to start moving away from the tradition of short work hours. The number of Germans working more than 40 hours per week rose sharply in 2004 to 5.3 million from 4.7 million in the previous year (Mandel, 2005).

For most adults, work represents nearly half of their waking life. The engagement level of employees world-wide, the realities of a global knowledge based economy, and increasing time spent in work, combine to make the workplace a critical setting for the application of positive psychology.

Employee Engagement

World-wide, the vast majority of employees across all levels of organizations are less than fully engaged in their work. According to a recent study completed by Towers Perrin, a global professional services firm providing worldwide human resource consulting, only 14% of employees worldwide indicate that they are highly engaged. Roughly a quarter are genuinely disengaged, and the remaining “massive middle,” 62% are only moderately engaged in work (Towers Perrin, 2005). There is no single country where employers can expect half or more of their employees to be fully engaged.

While definitions of engagement vary across surveys, the following definitions provided by The Gallup Organization represent the three levels of engagement. *Engaged* employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to their company. They drive innovation and move the organization forward. *Non-Engaged* employees are essentially “checked-out.” They’re sleepwalking through their workday, putting time – but not energy or passion – into their work. *Actively disengaged* employees aren’t just unhappy at work: they’re busy acting out their unhappiness. Every day, these workers undermine what their engaged coworkers accomplish (Gallup, 2006).

The Gallup Organization began measuring employee engagement in 2000. Their most recent study finds similar results. In the U.S., Gallup finds 31% of respondents fully engaged, 17% actively disengaged, and 52% not engaged. Outside the U.S. Gallup finds that 80% of British workers lack engagement with 25% actively disengaged. In France they find only 17% of workers fully engaged. Gallup estimates the annual economic costs of employee disengagement as high as 100 billion Euros in France, US\$64 billion in the UK, and US\$370 billion in the United States (Gallup, 2006).

Researchers with Towers Perrin argue that there is a significant difference between engaged employees and those that they term “willing,” the group defined as the massive middle of those employees neither engaged nor disengaged. “Willing employees get the job done as required. Engaged employees redefine the job to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and results. There are dramatic differences in employee’s views about the extent to which they can influence key aspects of performance in their day-to-day work, depending on their level of engagement” (Towers Perrin, 2005).

Researchers at Deloitte advocate the following steps in addressing engagement in the workplace (Deloitte, 2004):

1. Help employees effectively manage information overload.
2. Redesign jobs and working conditions.
3. Ensure that employees are effectively developed and well-deployed.
4. Examine the deployment and development of the people tasked with leading others.

Positive Psychology and the Workplace

In 1998, the president of the American Psychological Association, Martin Seligman, initiated a new emphasis in the field of psychology, referred to as *positive psychology*. The field of positive psychology with its focus on strengths and building the best in life has rich application in the workplace. Positive psychology has three areas of focus: 1) positive experiences such as happiness, pleasure, joy and fulfillment, 2) positive individual traits such as character, talents, and interests, and 3) positive institutions such as families, schools, business, communities, and society. Martin Seligman highlights the workplace as one of the “mansions of life” in his work *Authentic Happiness*. Simply stated, he argues that to maximize work satisfaction, individuals need to use their signature strengths every day. He offers the following

advice for achieving engagement and meaning in work: “recrafting your job to deploy your strengths and virtues every day not only makes work more enjoyable, but transmogrifies a routine job or a stalled career into a calling” (Seligman, 2002).

Positive psychology has fostered two related movements that apply positivity and strengths-based management to the workplace. The first movement is positive organizational scholarship (POS) grounded in the work of organizational scholars at the University of Michigan, which emphasizes positive organizational characteristics that can enhance organization survival and effectiveness. The second movement is known as positive organizational behavior (POB) grounded in the work of senior scientists with the Gallup Leadership Institute and the University of Nebraska, which emphasizes positively-oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and managed for performance enhancement in the workplace (Luthans, 2004).

In their work *Positive Organizational Scholarship*, Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn identify four “generative insights.” First, individuals, organizations, and societies benefit from institutional virtuousness. Connections between virtuousness and organizational functioning have been established. Virtuousness serves as an “inoculation” against negative and weakening occurrences in organizations. Second, positive attributes such as past successes, strengths of individuals and organizations serve as more effective targets of change and improvement than problem, weaknesses, and underdeveloped qualities. Third, positive emotions, positive energy, and positive human connections are self-reinforcing in nature and lead to mutually reinforcing upward spirals of meaningful experience and performance. Fourth, organizations can enable or disable positive dynamics, primarily through a sense of meaningfulness. Organizational design

can serve as a positive source of connection and coordination. A strengths focus has the potential to yield significant benefit for the leader, team, and organization (Cameron, 2003).

Luthan's work in positive organizational behavior, introduces the concept of positive psychological capital. "Just as other forms of capital are made up of certain components, for example traditional (financial, structural/physical, and technological), human (explicit and tacit knowledge), and social (networks, norms/values, and trust), positive psychological capital also contains some basic capacities. Those that best meet the positive organizational behavior criteria of being positive, unique, measurable, developable, and performance-related are self-efficacy/confidence, hope, optimism, and resiliency" (Luthans, 2004). From this, he proposes that "positive psychological capital management in particular can effectively channel people's talents, strengths, and psychological capacities toward achieving worthwhile, productive, ethical, sustainable outcomes and result in competitive advantage" (Luthans, 2004).

Meaning in Work

King and colleagues in their work *Positive Effect and the Experience of Meaning in Life* provide a definitional basis for meaning. "We can broadly state that a life is meaningful when it is understood by the person living it to matter in some larger sense. Lives may be experienced as meaningful when they are felt to have significance beyond the trivial or momentary, to have purpose, or to have a coherence that transcends chaos" (King, 2006). Meaning in work has traditionally been studied with an internal (within the individual) or external (the job and wider environment) focus. Research supports both perspectives, suggesting a dynamic view in which both the individual and the system act together to determine the types of meaning that will be experienced. Wrzesniewski argues for a third perspective on what constitutes the experience of work – "one that is not predetermined by the individual attributes or the design of the job, but

instead is open to the ways in which people shape their jobs to fit their unique orientation toward the domain of work” (Wrzesniewski, 2003).

Previous work by sociologists and psychologists has resulted in a tripartite model of work orientation. The model can be viewed on a continuum of job, career, and calling. Work experienced as a job is characterized by the individuals primarily focused on the financial rewards of work, a financial means to an end of enjoying time away from work. Work experienced as a career is marked by a focus on rewards that accompany movement and promotion through organizational structures (self-esteem, increased power, and higher social standing). Work experienced as a calling is marked by fulfillment that the work itself brings. In callings, the work is an end in itself. It is the individual doing the work who determines whether or not work serves a greater purpose. “For example, a schoolteacher who views work as a job and is simply interested in making a good income does not have a Calling, while a garbage collector who sees the work as making the world a cleaner, healthier place could have a Calling” (Wrzesniewski, 2003).

Dutton and Wrzesniewski have examined the practice of job crafting. Job crafting is defined as “the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work. Thus, job crafting is an action, and those who undertake it are job crafters, making job crafting both a verb and a noun (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). The concept of job crafting provides the framework within which people can change the way they approach the tasks in work, vary the kinds of tasks they complete, and moderate the number and nature of relationships they have with others in work.

Seligman argues that “a calling is the most satisfying form of work because, as a gratification, it is done for its own sake rather than for the material benefits it brings.” Seligman

proposes that work can be re-crafted to assist individuals in achieving a higher level of meaning. His “recipe” is as follows: 1) identify your signature strengths, 2) choose work that lets you use them every day, 3) re-craft your present work to use your signature strengths more, and 4) make room for employees to re-craft their work (Seligman, 2002).

Method

“The fledgling field of positive psychology calls for as much focus on strength as on weakness, as much interest in building the best things in life as in repairing the worst, and as much with fulfilling lives of healthy people as healing the wounds of the distressed. As positive psychology becomes its own field, the attention of some has turned to interventions intended to cultivate and to sustain the good life” (Peterson, 2004). This quote provided the motivation for the creation and pilot implementation of a model designed to assist individuals in moving along the continuum of job, career, and calling to positively impact overall job satisfaction.

A group of 20 individuals within the Human Resource function of a global fortune 250 financial services company were offered the opportunity to participate in a 12 week pilot program to recraft work and move along the continuum of job, career, and calling. The participants held a variety of roles in the Human Resource function including administrative support, functional specialists, managers, directors, and vice president level employees.

At the beginning of the project, each participant was asked to complete the VIA Classification of Strengths and Virtues (Peterson and Seligman), the Work-Life Questionnaire (Wrzesniewski), and General Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). These tools were made available through the authentic happiness web site at authentichappiness.org.

VIA Classification of Strengths and Virtues

Character strengths are positive traits reflected in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. The *Values in Action (VIA) Classification of Character Strengths* proposes 24 ubiquitous strengths of character (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The Values in Action (VIA) classification of strengths and virtues provides a vehicle for identifying, measuring and discussing human strengths in a way that supports the cultivation of virtues. Seligman posits that each person possesses several *signature strengths*. “These are strengths of character that a person self-consciously owns, celebrates, and (if he or she can arrange life successfully) exercises every day in work, love, play, and parenting” (Seligman, 2002). Martin Seligman and Christopher Peterson created the VIA Strengths Survey which takes approximately twenty-five minutes to complete and includes questions arrayed along 24 strengths. A report is provided, ordering individual strengths from top to bottom and identifying the top five or “signature strengths.”

Work-Life Questionnaire

Amy Wrzesniewski created the Work-Life Questionnaire. The questionnaire contains a set of three paragraphs each describing a prototypical job, career, and calling individual. Participants are instructed to read each description and then rate how much the paragraph is like them using a scale of very much, somewhat, a little or not at all. Additionally the questionnaire asks the participants to rate their satisfaction with their job on a scale of 1 – 7 with 1 completely dissatisfied and 7 completely satisfied. The results provide an indication of where on the job, career, calling continuum a person falls and a measure of job satisfaction. In the first study using this questionnaire, participants were divided almost equally in thirds with each third feeling that work was a job, career, or calling. Within the sample there was a group of twenty four individuals who held the same job title and worked in the same organization, with similar levels of pay, education, and tenure. This group was also evenly divided in the work orientations.

“This indicates that even in the same job done in the same organization, there are significant differences in how people make meaning of their work” (Wrzesniewski, 2003).

General Happiness Scale

This scale, created by Lyubomirsky & Lepper (1999), provides a general measure of happiness. The questionnaire consists of four questions each with a choice of responses on a seven point scale. Upon completion of the four questions a rating on a scale of 1 to 7 is provided, with seven indicating the high end of happiness on the scale. The mean for adult Americans is 4.8. Two-thirds of people score between 3.8 and 5.8 (Seligman, 2002).

Model for Moving Along the Job, Career, Calling Continuum

Using the job, career, calling continuum of work orientation as a foundation, a set of process and tools were designed to guide participants through the process of recrafting work. A diagram of the model is provided as Appendix A. The process consisted of five key phases: 1) Strengths Awareness, 2) Ideal Work Depiction, 3) Gap Analysis, 4) Work Recrafting Plan, and 5) Implementation and Gap Closure. A “tool kit” was provided to participants to guide their journey and included the following elements:

VIA Signature Strengths Report	Positive Introductions	Positive Portfolio
Me at My Best Writing	Three Blessing at Work Exercise	Coaching
360° Feedback	Future Best Self Writing	Peer Coaching
Naming and Claiming Strengths	Leverage of Positive Emotions	Hope Theory

Over five sessions, participants were guided through each phase of the process, with tools provided at each phase. Given the global distribution of participants, a toll free conference number was provided and in cities where multiple participants resided, individuals joined in

groups to participate in the call. Each call was scheduled for two hours. Between sessions, participants were encouraged to work with fellow participants and the project leader.

Prior to the first session, the group was introduced to positive psychology through the authentic happiness web site, a copy of the book *Authentic Happiness*, by Martin Seligman, and a copy of the article *Positive Psychology Progress: Empirical Validation of Interventions*, by Park, Peterson, Seligman, and Steen (2005). The key tools used at this first phase were the VIA Signature Strengths Report and a writing assignment to describe a time in the past where the participant utilized signature strengths at work, titled “Me at My Best at Work.” During the first session, participants shared their signature strengths with the group. A modified form of positive introductions was utilized whereby participants talked about the presence of signature strengths evidenced in their interactions with other participants on the call. Additionally, participants shared their “Me at My Best Stories” with the group. During the first distance period, participants were encouraged to seek out at least three other individuals, preferably a 360° feedback model where they received feedback from a supervisor, peers, and subordinates about the presence of their signature strengths at work. Additionally, the participants were instructed to continue to think about their signature strengths and the variety of ways the strengths presented in the work place. This began a process of naming and claiming signature strengths that weaved through the entire pilot program.

During the second session, participants were introduced to concepts in positive psychology including the value of positive emotions, the Losada line, and the concept of subjective well-being. The group discussed the results of their 360° feedback and further reflections on their signature strengths. Participants were introduced to best future self writings and a three blessings exercise. During the second distance period, participants were asked to practice a daily three blessings exercise for two weeks, whereby at the conclusion of each day they identified

three blessings in their work setting. Participants were free to modify the exercise to complete it at the beginning, throughout, or the end of their day. In addition, participants were asked to complete a writing of their best future self at work, describing in detail the use of signature strengths in their ideal work situation.

The third session focused on the impact of the three blessings exercise and a discussion of the future best self. Participants shared examples of blessings identified at work and discussed elements of work from their best future self writing. The group was then asked to begin assessing the gap between their ideal work depiction and their current work. A discussion of the various forms of job re-crafting followed. To assist in thinking of the range of job re-crafting, it was hypothesized that individuals could be viewed as falling into a bell shaped curve with the majority of individuals falling into a category of some fit between signature strengths and work whereby moderate degrees of recrafting would promote movement along the continuum of job, career, and calling. At one end of the curve, would be individuals with no apparent fit between signature strengths and work where the level of re-crafting would entail different work entirely while at the opposite end of the curve signature strengths and work would be fully aligned resulting in no need for re-crafting. While previous studies have shown that participants were relatively equally distributed between job, career, and calling (Wrzesniewski, 1997), this bell shaped construct helped the participants to envision the range of recrafting that could occur. During the third distance period, individuals were encouraged to work with Peer Coaches and were offered individual coaching by the project lead. In addition, the concept of a positive portfolio was introduced whereby participants could create a portfolio to be utilized in marshalling a desired state such as confidence. While thinking through potential approaches to recrafting work, the participants were introduced to hope theory.

At the fourth session, hope theory served as discussion focus. The model of agency, pathways, and goals was reviewed in the context of recrafting work. Participants shared their initial thoughts on recrafting plans. The degree of recrafting planned varied across the group. Some participants indicated that their current work fit their signature strengths closely and they saw little or no opportunity for recrafting. Others identified shifts in focus, opportunities to stop doing things that were inconsistent with their signature strengths, and modifications in the tasks that make up their work. Finally, several participants identified and pursued changes in jobs that were deemed to be more in line with signature strengths. The group was encouraged to utilize the constructs of hope theory as they built their implementation plans, creating multiple pathways toward their goal.

The fifth and final sessions were individualized coaching sessions that focused on assisting the participants with their implementation plan and gap closure.

Empirical Basis for Process and Tools Utilized in the Model

The pilot program is grounded in previous strength based development approaches articulated by the research scientists at The Gallup Organization (Hodges, In Press). Experience in working with talents was adapted for use in working with values and character strengths. Seligman writes that while both talents and strengths are subjects of positive psychology and have many similarities, they are different. “Strengths are moral traits, while talents are non-moral. Strengths such as integrity, valor, originality, and kindness are not the same thing as talents, such as perfect pitch, facial beauty or lightening fast sprinting speed. Talents in contrast to strengths are relatively automatic, whereas strengths are usually more voluntary” (Seligman, 2002). While there are differences in talents and strengths, the model for strengths based development designed for talents can inform an approach for working with signature strengths.

“At the individual level, strengths-based development involves three stages: identification of talent, integration into how one views himself or herself, and behavioral change” (Clifton & Harter, 2003). “This process involves many steps, including identifying things done at excellence, claiming them as strong points, naming them, sharing them with others, consciously thinking about how performance can be maximized if behaviors and talents are aligned, adding necessary knowledge and skill, and actively using the talents whenever necessary (Hodges, In Press). Strengths awareness serves as a critical step in connecting people to their capacities.

Peterson and Seligman in their handbook and classification of character strengths and virtues provide a classification of virtues that are “intended to reclaim the study of character and virtue as legitimate topics of psychological inquiry and informed societal discourse” (Peterson, 2004). The Values in Action (VIA) classification of strengths and virtues provides a vehicle for identifying, measuring and discussing human strengths in a way that supports the cultivation of virtues. “The virtue of a thing or being is what constitutes its value, in other words, its distinctive excellence” (Comte-Sponville, 1996). As Aristotle explained, virtue is a way of being. “In the general sense, virtue is capacity; in the particular sense, it is human capacity, the power to be human” (Comte-Sponville, 1996).

Meaning is defined through values. Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz describe values as a roadmap for action and articulate virtues as providing a source of inspiration and meaning that cannot be taken away (Loehr, 2003). Job recrafting that begins with virtues, elevates the effort to that which is distinctively excellent about the individual.

Well-being in organizations is in part a function of helping organizational members to exercise signature strengths in work. “Workplace well-being and performance are not independent. Rather, they are complimentary and dependent components of a financially and psychologically healthy workplace” (Harter, 2003). Strengths awareness is a necessary condition

for maximizing well-being in the organizational setting. Leaders can create a positive climate by “creating positive energy networks and by focusing on individuals’ strengths” (Cameron, 2006). Three approaches for developing people’s optimism have been identified: leniency for the past, appreciation for the present, and opportunity-seeking for the future (Schneider, 2001). Strengths awareness appears to be a critical first step in creating positive organizations. “An ideal organization is one in which each worker’s potentialities find room for expression” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). “Well-being in the workplace is, in part, a function of helping employees do what is naturally right for them, by freeing them up to do so – through behaviors that influence employee engagement and therefore that increase the frequency of positive emotions” (Harter, 2003).

Positive emotions generate “upward spirals” toward optimal functioning and enhanced emotional well-being (Frederickson, 2003). In organizations, positive social capital helps people grow, thrive, and flourish. High quality connections and reciprocity have been shown to create and sustain positive social capital by expanding the resource producing capabilities of positive relationships at work (Dutton, 2006).

Coaching has been linked to sustained behavior change and increased self-awareness and understanding (Wasylyshn, 2003). Pam Robbins in her book, *How to Implement a Peer Coaching Program*, defines a peer coaching relationship as “a confidential process through which two or more colleagues work together to reflect on current practices; expand, refine, and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another; and solve problems” (Robbins, 1991).

Gratitude is important because of its demonstrated causal link with positive outcomes. “The ability to notice, appreciate, and savor the elements of one’s life has been viewed as a crucial determinant of well-being (Emmons & Shelton, 2002). There are measurable benefits to regularly focusing on one’s blessings, and an effective way to become aware of benefits received

is to engage in a self-guided gratitude thought listing procedure (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Gratitude builds personal (cognitive, emotional, spiritual) and interpersonal resources (Emmons, 2003).

According to hope theory, hope reflects individuals' perceptions of their capacities to 1) clearly conceptualize goals; 2) develop the specific strategies to reach these goals: pathways thinking; and 3) initiate and sustain motivation for using those strategies: agency thinking (Lopez et al., 2004). Strategies for accentuating hope include: 1) hope finding which is focused on identifying hopes; 2) hope bonding focused on embracing the identified hope; 3) hope enhancing which includes clarifying goals, identifying numerous pathways to attainment, summoning energy to maintain pursuit, and reframing insurmountable obstacles into challenges to be overcome; and 4) hope reminding which is the promotion of effortful daily use of hopeful cognitions (Lopez et al., 2004).

Possible selves are personalized representations of goals. Possible Selves have been described as an essential link between self-concept and motivation (Markus & Nurius, 1986). "Writing about life goals might involve bringing awareness and clarity to one's life goals, reorganizing priorities, deciding on values – the type of processes that might be part of cognitive behavioral treatment" (King, 2001). It has been proposed that people periodically experience "jolts" that enable them to increase the clarity or change the content of their reflected best self portrait. "Jolts, when accompanied by socially embedded resources such as positive effect, positive relationships and personal agency enable personal transformation by 1) expanding the constellation of possible selves, 2) enhancing personal expressiveness, and 3) facilitating social architecting. These changes in turn, propel individuals along a pathway of becoming extraordinary" (Roberts, 2005).

David Cooperrider articulates a theory of positive organizational change that begins with an assumption that organizations are centers of human relatedness. “The model of organizational change involves three stages, moving from elevation of inquiry, to fusion of strengths, to activation of energy. Each stage is triggered by increases of inquiry into the appreciable world and the expansion of relatedness to others” (Cooperrider, 2003).

Results

The pilot project demonstrated value through a model of moving along the continuum of job, career, and calling using a defined process and set of empirically grounded tools. Fifty percent of the participants reported an increase in job satisfaction and as a group movement occurred along the job, career, and calling continuum. Finally, participants report the process equipped them with tools and resources that they will be able to call upon long after the pilot program’s completion.

The group had an average general happiness score of 5.5 at the beginning and 5.6 at the end of the project. Two of the eleven individual reporting, had an increase of one point in the general happiness score, with one of the eleven reporting a one point decrease in the general happiness score. The job recrafting project did not have a significant impact on the general happiness level as measured by the general happiness scale.

Job satisfaction increased for 50% of the individuals, moving a full point along the seven point job satisfaction scale. The average work life score at the beginning of the project was 5.7 and the average ending score was 6.0. The job recrafting project had a positive impact on job satisfaction for the majority of participants.

Individuals moved along the job career calling continuum, increasing career and calling ratings. The average for job was 0.5 at the beginning and end of the project. The average for

career was 0.5 at the beginning and 1.1 at the end of the project, representing a 120% increase. The average for calling was 1.4 at the beginning and 1.5 at the end of the project, representing a 7% increase.

The level of recrafting varied among the group, ranging from little to no change; modifications in tasks, focus, and approach to work; to changes in positions. Two participants entered new positions by the conclusion of the project. Other participants reported making significant changes to the content of their work. Some participants indicated that they did not identify any opportunities for recrafting, but gained an awareness of the fit between their work and signature strengths and an understanding of why they enjoy their work. One participant reported that the interplay of work and non-work activities mesh together to match his unique signature strengths profile, supporting participation in the arts away from work accompanied by detailed technical work in the workplace.

In reflecting on the most impactful aspect of the project, participants offered the following. Several participants cited the value of awareness that resulted from the project. “It’s truly made me aware of how fortunate I am to be where I am right now.” “I found the whole concept interesting. It was enlightening as to how you can make small changes in order to be happier in your career and your life in general.” “Thinking about how you can create more happiness in your life and in your career – to capitalize on what really makes you happy and excited at work. It made me think about the possibilities.”

A number of participants cited the three blessings exercise as the most valuable aspect of the project. “The biggest impact was identifying and keeping a log of blessings that occurred at work. It began the shift in thinking of good things that happened each day – lessons learned, interactions with colleagues – rather than focusing on negative things. Incorporating this type of

thinking into each day is uplifting; and, has allowed me to continue to draw upon and focus on blessing especially during times of stress.” “This was helpful in always seeing and reflecting on the parts of my job that I am thankful for and then being able to look back and see any consistency of themes in my blessings. It helps me to better understand myself and what I enjoy.” Interestingly, most participants cited one of the blessings that consistently made their daily listing of blessings was the people that they worked with. This is consistent with The Gallup Organization’s findings of the importance of friends in the workplace (Gallup, 2006).

A couple participants cited the simple act of taking time to reflect as the most valuable component of the three month program. “The reflection had the most impact on me. Taking the time and looking at my signature strengths and how I utilize them in my job helped me recognize my contributions.” “It was very helpful to take the time to reflect on enhancing my job satisfaction through this project.”

The majority of participants cited the concept of leveraging signature strengths in work was the most powerful impact of the project. “The reassurance of my signature strengths as I know them (and now confirmed) has enabled me to identify my direction and goal.” “My best future self at work allowed me to look at my signature strengths and apply them to my current position and identify the gap I need to work on to make myself better at what I do.” “I found it helpful to identify my signature strengths so that I can be more aware of opportunities to use these strengths in my personal and work life.” “Since we began our work to identify signature strengths and re-crafting our jobs to align with them, I have recognized opportunities that I did not know existed.”

Discussion

There are a number of macros factor impacting the workplace. Significant demographic shifts; a “flatter world” with new markets; new technologies that are continuously redefining how, where, and by who work is performed; rapid and significant expansion of information and flow of knowledge; people-dependent business strategies; and changing social attitudes and individual expectations about work are combining to change the workplace in dramatic ways. No where in the world are more than 50% of employees actively engaged in work. Work environments are increasingly referenced as toxic. Connections are being drawn between the work place and health, with work being identified as a cause of death. Work represents a significant portion of most adult life. The growing field of positive psychology provides a rich set or resources to be deployed in the workplace to increase engagement and meaning.

The pilot program connecting people with their signature strengths and virtues and tying unique signature strengths to work design provides an opportunity to recraft work aligning work to an individual’s unique excellence. As work and signature strengths align, opportunities for engagement and meaning emerge. The pilot program provided examples of how employees can recraft work at various levels, from minor changes to complete changes in jobs. It is important to note that the pilot occurred during a time of significant organizational change. The pilot was introduced shortly after a corporate restructuring that eliminated 1,500 positions and an announcement that the organization planned to spin off a portion of the company as an independent publicly traded organization. This created additional work volume, uncertainty about the future, and the reality that the pilot group would be separated at the time of the spin off. With that as a back drop, the maintenance of job satisfaction for half the participants and an

increase of one full point on a seven point scale for half the participants provide an indication of the power of the model, process, and tools.

The implementation of this model was a pilot. As such, refinements to the model and testing more rigorously are required to determine if the approach leads to sustainable improvements in job satisfaction. In addition, employee engagement (for the participant and the work groups under the supervision of participants) should be measured and correlated to job recrafting. It can be hypothesized that job recrafting will lead to higher engagement. Higher engagement on the part of the leader should lead to improved engagement for the employees in his or her workgroup. Additional tests of the model using a control group should also be conducted. Longitudinal studies measuring the impact of development over time and testing the model with a variety of audiences is required. Future research holds the promise of applying positive psychology to the domain of work, a significant venue for individual happiness, engagement, and meaning.

Within the field of positive psychology, progress is being made in testing interventions that increase happiness and well being. Seligman notes “one challenge for researchers is to develop better behavior-based, domain-specific assessment tools. We suspect that productivity at work and physical health follow the same patterns as subjective happiness, and we will welcome the day when objective productivity and health measures supplement subjective happiness measures” (Seligman, 2005). The model depicted in this pilot program provides a starting point for testing and measuring the impact of domain-specific tools. These tools, deployed in the workplace, hold potential to help individuals flourish, find their calling, and experience higher levels of meaning.

The challenges facing organizations and employees will require changes in the way organizations accomplish objectives, individuals approach work, and leaders approach their roles. Leadership is critical in this challenging environment. Jaworski argues that true leadership is about creating a “domain in which we continually learn and become more capable of participating in our unfolding future. A true leader thus sets the stage on which predictable miracles, synchronistic in nature, can and do occur” (Jaworski, 1996). An important element in setting this stage and unlocking these predictable miracles is an awareness of unique strengths of each individual in the enterprise, recrafting work to align with those strengths, and engaging work from a place of meaning and values.

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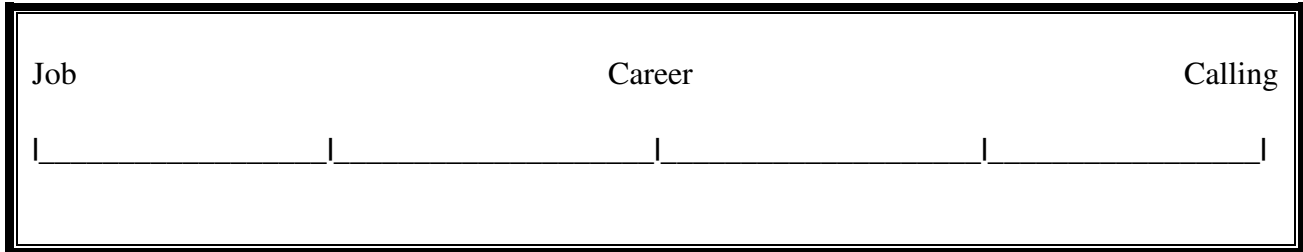
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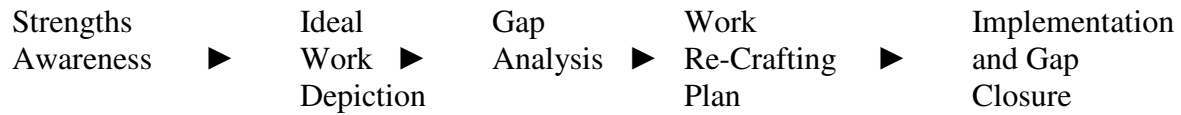
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Appendix A: Model

Continuum



Process



Tools

VIA Signature Strengths Report	Positive Introductions	Positive Portfolio
Me at My Best Writing	Three Blessing at Work Exercise	Coaching
360° Feedback	Future Best Self Writing	Peer Coaching
Naming and Claiming Strengths	Leverage of Positive Emotions	Hope Theory