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Positive Workplace: Enhancing Individual & Team Productivity
by Jocelyn S. Davis,
Second Edition[1]
John H. Cable

Positive Workplace: Enhancing Individual and Team Productivity[1]

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Abstract

The global workforce is stressed: employees are disengaged; senior managers will be retiring in record numbers without obvious replacements available; morale is low; more than half of US workers are passive job seekers; turnover rates are high; turnover is expensive; managers are not effective; many projects represent significant risks of failure to their corporate sponsors. Improving the performance of individuals and project teams depends upon a new and coherent approach to the workplace of the present and the future.

This paper introduces key concepts and research results on the power of engagement, strengths-focus, optimism, resilience, hope, positive emotions, and the key characteristics of high performance teams to yield real change in the workplace – change that will result in sustainable competitive advantage.

This paper outlines empirically validated methods to improve productivity, sales, profitability, employee and customer satisfaction while reducing safety incidents, theft losses, absenteeism, stress-related illness, and attrition rates.

Additionally, PM's will learn how and why the shift from a weakness-correction model to a strengths-focused model amplifies employee performance. PM's will also come to understand the impact of emotion on performance: how the right blend of positive and negative emotions yields high performance project teams and how optimism and resilience can be developed to strengthen individual and project team performance.

Introduction

For PM's, the global workplace forms the foundation of their work environment, a work environment which is increasingly complicated by the virtual nature of many teams. Let's consider for a moment the state of this global work environment.

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[1] *Second Editions are previously published papers that have continued relevance in today's project management world, or which were originally published in conference proceedings or in a language other than English. Original publication acknowledged; authors retain copyright. This paper was originally presented at the PMI Global Congress 2012 – North America and included in the congress proceedings. It is republished here with permission of the authors.*

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We've reorganized, process-improved, downsized, and right-sized and outsourced - all to gain and maintain competitive advantage. Global and domestic economic pressures continue to intensify. Many key strategic projects fail – to meet expectations, to meet budget or to meet schedule.

The employer-employee contract has changed forever. Employers wanted a workforce made up of flexible, independent workers thereby providing a flexible labor pool for companies. In actuality, it's a classic good news-bad news story. The workforce has become more dynamic and flexible, but is no longer a loyal workforce. In this modern workplace experienced talent is increasingly scarce. Employers and employees each have real choices. Employers can select the best employees and increasingly, the **employees** can select the best **employers.**

While the underlying terms of the employment contract have changed, there are other workplace changes, too.

- Employee morale is low. (Energy for Performance, Undated)
- The risk of staff turnover is real. Staff turnover is very costly. Cost of attrition is estimated at 18 months' wages for managers and 6 months' wages for hourly employees. Cost of attrition is estimated at 18 months' wages for managers and 6 months' wages for hourly employees. (Accenture, 2003)
- Senior employees are nearing retirement age in record numbers. Experts estimate that globally between 40 and 70% of senior executives will be eligible for retirement within five years. Further, in developed nations, a 15% drop in the number of people of "key leader age" is expected. (Gandossy, 2006)
- Employees are disengaged from their work, in the U.S. and globally. Towers Perrin estimates that 1 in 7 employees globally is fully engaged leaving the other 6 disengaged in various degrees. (Energy for Performance, Undated)
- The Gallup Organization (Gallup) reports that fully 28% of the U.S. workforce is engaged, 54% not engaged, and 17% actively disengaged. (Gallup, 2004)
- Gallup estimates that the cost of employee disengagement in the U.S. annually is $375 billion in direct costs and total costs are likely to exceed $1 trillion or 10% of Gross Domestic Product annually. (Gallup)

90% of managers are ineffective; managers are the key driver to employee engagement in the workplace.
It is in this complex environment that project managers work to deliver strategic projects.

We know that for senior project managers to consistently deliver successful projects they must have superior technical skills and project management expertise.

We believe that they must also be expert in the "soft stuff" – masters of the interpersonal management skills which get results – and help both people and projects flourish.

Schools and continuing development programs provide strong technical knowledge to project managers. Emerging programs in project management also provide needed (what kind of different) knowledge to the project manager.

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Daniel Goleman, writing in *Emotional Intelligence* (2000), reports that 67% of the competencies necessary to be a successful manager are emotional competencies: personal competencies of self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation and social competencies of empathy and social skills. (Goleman, 2000) Few, if any of us, have actually been schooled in these competencies and yet they are essential for our success in business and likely to be increasingly important given global trends in the workforce and workplace.

So, here we are.

How We Attain Project Goals

To attain our project goals we need to bring to bear expert technical knowledge and keen project management skills. Delivery on both the technical and PM elements of every project rests squarely on the people on the project.

Based on many measures, our people are in trouble and too many of our projects are in the red zone. Those projects outside the red zone are not yielding maximized results – nor are they setting up sustainable competitive advantage.

Creating the Environment for Competitive Advantage

This paper will present some essential research and applications for improving individual and project team performance through the development of a Positive Workplace. PM's are able to create the environment within which people and teams can flourish.

This is not a theoretical paper.

Rather, this paper reports on the theory, empirical research, **and** some of the practical applications tested in the PM field. As one example, we've introduced this material to senior PM's from a global IT company. They report back that the applications make a real difference in their teams and their own performance. Understanding the business case for the "soft stuff" has opened up new and real opportunities to enhance the performance and results of their teams and the company.

Their feedback has been unequivocal: every PM, indeed every leader/manager in their organization, should use this work to create the real – and sustainable – competitive advantage.

This is not another 'flavor of the month', 'feel good' management fad.

The Positive Workplace is based on empirically tested theory for how to improve the workplace for the individuals, the teams, the projects and ultimately for the organization itself.

And, we're not offering feel good metrics. We offer empirical research that supports improvements in the key business drivers against which all projects and organizations are measured.

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So, let's examine some of the key elements of our business case.

The Business Case

This business case sets forth the rationale for incorporating engagement; strengths-based management; optimism, resilience, and hope; and positive emotions and high performance teams research into every day project management.

We will also demonstrate how key business drivers and key team behaviors central to project evaluation and project management can be improved by adding these elements to your day to day management of projects.

We are going to briefly present the business case and elaborate on the concepts and provide applications in the following sections.

Employee Engagement

- Firms with a high employee commitment index (ECI) rated 36 percentage points higher in total return to shareholders than those with low ECI. Firms with a high ECI outperformed the S&P 500 by 24 percentage points. (Watson Wyatt, 2000)

- High levels of employee engagement predict these changes in key business drivers (Gallup, 2004):

Increases	Decreases
Profitability	Theft
Productivity	Safety Incidents
Sales	Stress
Customer Loyalty	Attrition
Life Satisfaction	Absenteeism
	Mortality and morbidity

- Towers Perrin reports that companies with engagement levels above the industry sector average for engagement outperformed their peer group by 17% on operating margin. (Paton, 2004)

Strengths-based Management (Doing More of What You Do Best)

- A focus on strengths-based management yields better results than the traditional weakness-correction model. (Gallup, 2004)

Optimism, Resilience, and Hope (An Action Oriented Attitude)

- "Companies with resilient cultures grew in value, between 1926 and 1999, sixteen times more than the market average and six times more than comparison companies of similar sizes in similar industries." (Collins & Porras, 2002)

- Optimistic individuals[2] when compared to pessimistic ones ---

  - Optimistic students outperform expectations based on prior performance by 1.5 standard deviations (Seligman lecture, 2004)
  - Optimists are better able to perform complex cognitive tasks. They are faster and more accurate. (Seligman, 2002)
  - Optimists are better able to think of multiple solutions to problem solving.
  - Optimists enjoy better longevity (9 to 10 years more) and better immune system function. (Seligman, 2002)
  - Optimistic college students earn 25% more than their most pessimistic colleagues. (Seligman lecture, 2004)

- Gallup reports that more hopeful managers have better business unit results when compared to less hopeful managers and adjusted for starting performance level of the business unit.

Positive Emotions and High Performance Teams

- High performance teams, measured on three key metrics (profitability, 360 feedback and customer loyalty), exhibit three critical interaction ratios. These address the ratio of positive/negative emotion, focus on other/self, and inquiry/advocacy in discussions. (Losada & Heaphy, 2004) (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005)

- Positive emotions are not the absence of negative emotions. Rather, they are a separate emotional state with a specific purpose. (Fredrickson, 2003)

- Positive emotions build psychological capital in four areas (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005):

  - Cognitive: smarter, generative, more accurate
  - Social: better social networks, more tolerant of diversity
  - Physical: longer life span
  - Antidote to negative emotions (Fredrickson, Mancuso, et al, 2000)

The research suggests that, engagement or employee commitment; strengths-based management; optimism, resilience, and hope; and positive emotions and high performance teams all support and sustain favorable business outcomes.

The concepts explained – and illustrated.

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[2] Optimism can be assessed and improved through proven applications. See following sections on optimism, resilience, and hope.

Engagement or Employee Commitment

Engagement is well-researched by the Gallup Organization. Gallup defines engagement at three levels: engaged, not-engaged and actively disengaged. (Gallup, 2004)

Engaged employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to their company. They drive innovation and move the organization forward.

Not-engaged employees have 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 are busy acting out.

Gallup estimates that U.S. employees are 28% engaged, 54% not-engaged, and 17% actively disengaged. (Gallup, 2004) Disengagement is estimated to cost the U.S. economy more than $1 trillion annually or 10% of GDP. (Gallup, 2004)

Engagement is a powerful force in the workplace. It is also an elegantly simple force in the workplace.

Over nearly a decade of research, Gallup has developed and tested the Q12.   Here are the Q12:

1.   Do you know what is expected of you at work?
2.   Do you have the materials and equipment that you need to do your work right?
3.   At work, do you have the opportunity to do your best?
4.   In the last seven days, have you received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5.   Does your supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about you as a person?
6.   Is there someone at work who encourages your development?
7.   At work, do your opinions seem to count?
8.   Does the mission/purpose of your company make you feel your job is important?
9.   Are your associates committed to doing quality work?
10.   Do you have a best friend at work?
11.   In the last six months, has someone talked to you about your progress?
12.   In the last year, have you had opportunities to learn and grow?

Consider for a moment these questions:

- For each of the Q12, what level of approval do you need as a PM to implement?

- For each of the Q12, what is the likely expenditure required to implement? Rate this none, low, moderate, and high relative to your budget context.

- For each of the Q12, what level of effort would be required in your project team to implement all or some actions to move your Q12 score up?

What are your conclusions?

Our conclusion is clear: the implementation of the Q12 improvement plan can be initiated at any level in the organization and generally without high levels of approval.   You could implement Q12 tomorrow in your own project team. Ideally, the implementation of the Q12 is a corporate-wide initiative, but it needn't be.

> What's your piece of the $1 trillion lost annually in the U.S. to disengagement?

> What change can you make in your team tomorrow?

> What action will you take tomorrow to improve your Q12?

Let's consider putting just one of the Q12 elements in motion in the workplace: -

Have you received recognition or praise for doing good work?

Recognition is especially important given Gallup's estimate that 25% of employees are ignored by their managers – and likely a significant contributor to employee disengagement. (Gallup, 2004) Two-thirds of those who are actively disengaged are totally ignored by their supervisors. (Gallup, 2004)

So, how might you increase the affirmative answers to this Q12 element?

First, I know that each of us is terribly busy and that putting one more thing on the to-do list is out of the question. How, you may well be asking yourself, can I possibly do this for all my team members and still get the work done?

Daniel Kahneman reports that there are 20,000 micro moments in each of our days. (Rath & Clifton, 2004) These micro moments are but a few second each, but each is sufficient to generate either positive or negative emotional experiences. Since we have 20,000 of these micro moments and they will have impact on ourselves and others, let's commit to making them count for better individual and team performance.

Consider some of the following ways to fill those micro moments and build this Q12 element.

- Find something good about each person you encounter and tell them about it

- Use appreciative moments in group meetings to recognize important contributions: "George, that was a great meeting you conducted yesterday with the client. It really helped define the problem so we could take action."

- Pay attention to people as you interact with them. Turn away from the computer, put the phone on hold and say to the person bringing their monthly status report to you: "Sue, it's great to see you. I'm looking forward to catching up on your key project. The client called yesterday to let me know how well they think things are going."

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A few other notes on engagement as studied and reported by Gallup and others.

▪ Engagement is estimated to be the result of individual psychological characteristics (Entec Corporation, 2004) – 20% -- and workplace conditions – 80%. This means that the workplace needs to be adjusted to foster and sustain engagement. It also means that some benefit will result from teaching employees to enhance their own engagement.

▪ Beyond the elements identified in the Q12 directly, Gallup reports that there are some other influencers of employee engagement.

   o Effectiveness of managers is highly correlated with the level of employee engagement. (Krueger & Killham, 2006)
   o Physical environment – Dilbert's right --- including the opportunity to personalize workspace, see outside and have minimal exposure to noise (Krueger & Killham, 2006)
   o Coupling engagement with a strengths-focused management style is the most powerful workplace intervention in terms of key business drivers. (Gallup, 2004)

Strengths-based Management

"Building on strengths is more effective than trying to improve weaknesses." (Gordon, 2002)

As we begin this part of the discussion, it's important to point out that correction of weaknesses is a valid management method. It's useful when teaching a skill or reinforcing a skill in practice. It is useful when seeking compliant behavior. It is not the only management method, however; and just as not all carpentry tasks require a hammer, not all management tasks require weakness-correction.

Strengths can be defined as Gallup does in terms of workplace strengths (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001) or as Seligman and Peterson do in *Character Strengths and Virtues* (Peterson & Seligman, 2005) as fundamental, durable qualities that describe us at our best.

Workplace strengths per Gallup are descriptive of the individual primarily in terms of the workplace and therefore, limited in describing the essential individual. Based on Gallup's research in high schools, which they indicate would translate into the workplace, a change from a weakness-correction model to strengths-focused management yields the following changes between the strengths-focused group and the control group over a four year study. (Gallup, 2004)

▪ 8.7% increase in grade point average
▪ 47.2% decrease in late to class
▪ 28.2% decrease in absenteeism

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Gallup has also conducted research in the workplace, combining engagement training and a strengths-focused management approach. The results of that study show unequivocally that engagement measured by the Q12 coupled with a change to a strengths-focused management style yielded better results than the typical weakness correction model or the engagement improvements alone.

Gallup reports that managers using a strengths-focused style have a success rate on performance outcomes 1.9 times higher than the traditional manager. (Gallup, 2004)

Let's play with a carpentry example for a moment. Consider this management allegory:

> Joe was the shop manager. He had a job to do. He needed to extract a screw from a piece of wood. Joe looked at the assignment and chose the hammer because it was in the hammer's job description to remove metal pieces from wood. .
>
> Ok, Joe thought. I can get this screw out of the wood with the claw end of the hammer. No problem. So he hooked the claw end of the hammer under the screw and pulled. Tougher than he thought. So he pulled harder. And pulled harder still, but the screw remained in the piece of wood.

Joe was pretty frustrated with the hammer's performance. So, Joe had to tell the hammer how badly it was doing its job. It wasn't able to pull the screw from the wood. This just wouldn't do. The hammer would need training and coaching to improve its performance if it wanted to keep its job as the extractor of metal from wood.

The hammer felt if only he were a better hammer he'd be able to do this job well. If only he were more like the screwdriver. So, the hammer went off to training and got personal coaching and spent a lot of time doing non-hammer things so that he'd be able to remove screws from wood – so that he'd be more like the screwdriver.

As time went on he had less time to do hammer things and worried more about his entire job as a hammer than ever before. If only he could be more like the screwdriver. He often felt sick on Monday's. He was tossing and turning at night with worry. And he tried to lay low so as not to demonstrate his lack of prowess as the extractor of metal from wood, at least until he got to be more like the screwdriver.

And then, one day, Joe needed to pull a nail from a piece of wood. So, Joe picked the screwdriver up and began the task. After all, it was already clear that the hammer wasn't all that good at pulling metal from wood. And lately the hammer had been really worried and anxious about his work and his work just wasn't as good as it use to be. So, Joe slid the edge of the screwdriver under the nail and tried to lever it out. No go. So, he moved the screwdriver around to the other side of the nail and tried again. Still no go.

What was it with these employees? Now not only wasn't the hammer any good at his job, it was rubbing off on the screwdriver! What's a manager to do?

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"Building on strengths is more effective than trying to improve weaknesses." (Gordon, 2002)

At its most fundamental, strengths-based management suggests that individuals should be encouraged to identify and utilize their own strengths in everyday activities to the greatest extent possible. Activities that don't play to their strengths can be accomplished differently: outsourced, reassigned, or restructured to play to their strengths.

In the workplace there needs to be an ongoing assessment and adjustment of work to assignment to continuously match strengths to task or role to yield the best results. Flexibility of role and assignment to best match strengths to task supports individual performance which yields sustainable competitive advantage.

PM's in a positive workplace see and relate to individuals as individuals, not as generic employees.

Managers benefit from getting to know their employees—their particular strengths – and finding ways to utilize those strengths everyday. (Please note: this isn't to say that some times, in fact many times, the job just has to get done whether it suits someone's strengths or not. And, that's true. But managers dedicated to improving individual and team performance will match person to task, strength to assignment, as often as possible.)

The Character Strengths model developed by Peterson and Seligman (Peterson & Seligman, 2005), available free at www.authentichappiness.com, describes an individual's top five or signature strengths from 24 character strengths identified through extensive research as character strengths that cross-cut historical period, culture, religion and country. Within this construct, your signature strengths represent you at your best. This model has comparative advantage over the Gallup model because it reflects the individual without regard to context: work or personal life.

Character strengths are described as follows (Peterson & Seligman, 2005):

- Me at my personal and unique best

- Not a zero sum game. Display of strength by one doesn't diminish others

- The strength is primary in that it cannot be decomposed into other strengths

- Notable examples of people who embody these strengths exist and are recognized

- Valued in its own right

- Individuals are moved to use their strengths

- Culture supports and recognizes these strengths

- Supported by cultural institutions

The 24 character strengths are grouped within six virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2005). These are described below in Exhibit 1.

Virtue	Strength	Virtue	Strength
Wisdom and Knowledge	Creativity Curiosity Open-mindedness Love of learning Perspective	*Justice*	Citizenship and teamwork Fairness, equity and justice Leadership
Courage	Bravery Persistence Integrity Zest	*Temperance*	Forgiveness and mercy Humility/modesty Prudence Self-regulation
Humanity	Love and be loved Kindness Social intelligence	*Transcendence*	Appreciation of beauty Gratitude Hope/optimism Humor Spirituality

Character Strengths and Virtues
Exhibit 1

Consider for a moment the strengths listed above. Which would be useful in the project management context?

At a recent workshop facilitated by the Positive Workplace Alliance (PWA), we asked senior project managers at a global IT company to share positive introductions. It was an experienced and skeptical audience. Here's one of the stories.

> I was piloting the new plane of our flying club out of an airport just north of the city. It was a six passenger plane and was full of club members, all pilots and friends. We'd had a great flight out over the suburbs and the river and were returning to the airport. The plane had a fixed wheel structure under the wings and a nose wheel that was retractable. In preparation for landing, we began to put the nose gear down. On our first attempt, the gear didn't go down. So we circled again and tried to lower the gear manually. No go with that either. We notified the tower and they suggested we try again while they prepared for our possible emergency landing. We tried repeatedly, and without success, to get the nose gear down. With no real choice but to put the plane down on the runway without the nose gear down, we dumped fuel in anticipation of an emergency landing. As we approached the runway we could see the waiting emergency vehicles.
>
> Well, the plane came in with nary a scratch. I've got the pictures of the plane on my laptop. Would you like to see them?

Take a minute and consider what character strengths are evident in this brief story.

Optimism, bravery, persistence, humility to name a few.

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The workshop participants had worked with this man for 20 years. While the story brought goose bumps to all who heard the story, his teammates were left with a new and deeper understanding of him as a person.

This positive introduction type exercise builds team connections and provides information about each of us that goes well beyond education and experience. We use this exercise to build and enhance teams even in virtual environments.

The literature and applications for these strengths in both the workplace and personal life are extensive. The University of Michigan School of Business and its Positive Organizational Scholarship group are using strengths and strengths-based management to pioneer a radically new 360 degree feedback instrument, the Reflected Best Self. This breakthrough work was featured in a Harvard Business Review article recently.

Optimism, Resilience, and Hope

Optimism

Optimism, resilience and hope are variations on the human capacity to assess events – past, present and future – and take appropriate actions to effect future results.

Optimism is defined as having a positive explanatory style relative to both positive and negative events in the past (Buchanan & Seligman, 1995). Explanatory style considers how we assess good events and bad events as to permanence and pervasiveness (Buchanan & Seligman, 1995).

An example for clarity.

> Frank just received his mid-term grade in chemistry. It was a C-. He has several more mid-term exams to take and he's now really in a funk. The C- in chemistry just proves that he's not cut out for this major. He'll never get through chemistry with this mid-term grade. And he just knows that this is the start of a run of bad mid term grades.
>
> *Frank is displaying a pessimistic explanatory style. He sees the C- in chemistry as permanent – he won't do well in the course overall – and pervasive – he just knows that this one poor mid-term grade is the harbinger of a semester full of poor mid-term grades.*
>
> Mark on the other hand is considering the C- he received on his chemistry mid-term. He knows he really should have passed on that fraternity mixer the night before and maybe a little time with the teaching assistant before the next exam would help him better understand some of the more difficult parts of the material. He's decided to cancel the rest of his social calendar and buckle down for the rest of his mid-terms. He knows that he can do better with a bit more work and this first mid-term grade has galvanized him to do better.

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> *Mark is an optimist in his explanatory style. He's able to see the C- as a discrete event that is neither permanent – he'll do better on the next exam — and not pervasive – in fact, not only won't his other mid-term grades be poor, he's going to do something about it right now.*

Pessimism constrains the future actions one will take. Optimism leaves open the possibility of more, alternative future actions. (Buchanan & Seligman, 1995) (Seligman, 1998)

In the workplace, optimism leads to better problem-solving, more creative thinking, better accuracy and speed on complex analyses, and better health (Seligman, 1998). This is not to say, of course, that a negative or critical view of things isn't useful or appropriate. Only to say, that it is useful and appropriate some of the time and only to the extent that it doesn't discourage future action.

Gallup reports that more optimistic managers perform better and that their teams do as well.

In addition to demonstrating the benefits of optimism to both the individual and the team, research indicates that optimism can be assessed and perhaps even developed.

Resilience

Resilience is the "capacity to bounce back from adversity, uncertainty, failure, or even positive but seemingly overwhelming changes such as increased responsibility." (Reivich & Shatte', 2002) Assessments of resilience are also available.

In *Built to Last*, Collins and Porras report that "companies with resilient cultures grew in value, between 1926 and 1999, sixteen times more than the market average and six times more than the comparison companies of similar sizes in similar industries." (Lapin, 2003)

Certainly with this kind of track record in terms of company value, resilience is a potentially fruitful area for project managers interested in improving individual, team and organizational performance. Resilience is a trainable characteristic. (Reivich & Shatte', 2002)

Research is ongoing in this area and is likely to bear fruit for the development and sustainment of the positive workplace.

Hope

Hope is the "motivational state that is based on the interaction between three factors: goals, agency, and pathways." Hope is the combination of waypower and willpower. (Snyder, 1994)

Put in simpler terms, hope is the capacity to form goals, generate plans and alternative plans and then to take the necessary action with the necessary effort for the necessary duration to accomplish them. People without hope have no goals, see no alternatives and can neither find nor sustain their motivation for action. (Snyder, 1994)

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The role of hope has been well-researched in nonbusiness arenas and is currently under study in business applications. Hope appears to be important in business and supportive of improvements in individual and team performance.

"Leaders' hope has a significant positive impact on business unit financial performance, employees' job satisfaction, and their retention." (Luthans & Youssef, 2004)

So, what does hope*less*ness look like in the workplace? Consider this story:

> The organizational consultant came in to meet with the project manager, one of several on a major international technology integration project. The purpose of the meeting was to develop an understanding about what needed to be the focus of the upcoming project update meeting; what would contribute to that meeting's success; and what could get in the way of a successful meeting. The conversation went something like this….

> Bob, the project manager: "Well, I guess we're at this again. We've had these meetings periodically and nothing ever seems to change. Everyone knows what's going wrong with this part of the project. And no one really wants to talk about it. I've simply given up making suggestions. No one listens. No one will make any changes.

> The powers that be won't delegate the simplest decision to the project manager and they won't listen to our advice either. We just seem to do the same things over and over again, even when we know how it worked the last time.

Bob the project manager is experiencing hopelessness.

He brings neither waypower nor willpower to the work of this project team. He's not looking for solutions because he has no fundamental belief that they will have any positive future effect.

Haven't we all seen this in some workplaces?

What can we do in ours to prevent the loss of waypower and willpower?

Preliminary research suggests that hope can be developed for – and by - managers and employees through several activities keyed to waypower and willpower development. (Luthans & Youssef, 2004)

- clear, measurable, specific, challenging goal setting

- "stepping", the breaking down of complex/difficult tasks into smaller more manageable pieces

- Waypower building requires delegation and empowerment where employees, and managers, feel authorized to take action

- Willpower is enhanced by getting prepared for the future: contingency planning and rehearsals

- Resetting goals when necessary based on new information and objectives

How can you as a PM build hope on your team?

High Performance Teams and the Role of Positive Emotion

High Performance Teams

Research into the interaction styles of high performance teams highlights opportunities to improve individual and project team performance. The study rated strategic business units (SBU's) on three common criteria for business unit performance: profitability, customer satisfaction and 360 reviews (to assess how the team worked with others in the organization). SBU's were rated as high, medium or low performers based on these metrics. (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005) The findings are important to improving individual and team performance.

High performance teams are characterized by three key interaction style ratios: (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005)

Positive /Negative		The ratio of positive comments (showing support, encouragement, or appreciation) to negative comments (disapproval, sarcasm or cynicism) elicited in the course of the SBU's observed update of a strategic plan. Too low a ratio and the ability of the team to generate solid, actionable alternatives dried up and the team tended to focus on the same-old, same-old. Too high a ratio and the group was unable to perform at top levels. But when the ratio was just right. When there was appropriate elicitation of negative emotions in proportion to positive emotions, the team was able to generate new and innovative ideas and act upon them.		**H** 5.614 **M** 1.855 **L** .363
Other/Self		Other/Self Ratios refer to the number of times the group referred to others (clients, stakeholders: those neither present nor part of the company) and not to self (those in the room at the time or the company). Teams that over-focused on self were not as successful as those that effectively balanced interests of others with the interests of self.		**H** .935 **M** .622 **L** .034
Inquiry/		Inquiry/Advocacy Ratios refer to the types of responses offered within the group.		**H** 1.143

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Positive /Negative		The ratio of positive comments (showing support, encouragement, or appreciation) to negative comments (disapproval, sarcasm or cynicism) elicited in the course of the SBU's observed update of a strategic plan. Too low a ratio and the ability of the team to generate solid, actionable alternatives dried up and the team tended to focus on the same-old, same-old. Too high a ratio and the group was unable to perform at top levels. But when the ratio was just right. When there was appropriate elicitation of negative emotions in proportion to positive emotions, the team was able to generate new and innovative ideas and act upon them.		**H** 5.614 **M** 1.855 **L** .363
Advocacy		Inquiry responses asked for more information and sought to first understand. Advocacy responses offered the respondent's position and rebuttal without seeking further understanding.		**M** .667 **L** .052

Key Interaction Ratios of Teams
Exhibit 2

H = High Performance Team   M = Medium Performance Team   L = Low Performance Team

All of this suggests that improving individual and team performance will not result from wholesale replacement of the interaction styles and techniques with which we are all familiar. It does strongly suggest that building a better team means focus on both the positive and the negative - and in the right measure.

Positive Emotions

Positive emotions are not the absence of negative emotions. (Fredrickson, 2003)

Negative emotions – anger, fear, disgust – as we all learned in biology support our basic behavior for survival – the fight or flight response. Negative emotions are effective because they move us to immediate action in dangerous circumstances; they insure our survival. But, what they don't do is encourage expansive, creative thinking. (Fredrickson, 2003)

When the saber-toothed tiger roared at our ancestors, they weren't interested in considering all possible solutions, picking the best one after consultation with their tribe, some consensus-building, and then taking action. They'd have been dinner in that time sequence.

Negative emotions illicit narrow, immediately actionable thinking aimed at survival in the present moment. (Fredrickson, 2004)

The wiring of our negative emotions to immediate survival-ensuring actions served us well with the saber-toothed tiger. And, because evolution takes millennia, we humans continue to have that same hardwiring. We respond to anger and fear with the same basic behavior.

In the modern workplace evocation of negative emotions generates the same response as the saber-toothed tiger. We fight! We flee! We freeze! And, we spend the absolute minimum time figuring out which course of action to take. Of course, these actions are tempered now by where we are, whom we're with, and how much we need that next paycheck. But the physiological response is identical.

Negative emotions instantly shut down, limit, our alternative, collaborative, inclusive thinking. (Fredrickson, 2004)

In the workplace, this evolutionarily hardwired response to negative emotions results in win/loss thinking: (Fredrickson, 2004)

- Limited and reactive

- Survival oriented in the present, little long term consideration

- Focused only on winning

Positive emotions, on the other hand, generate a more expansive and inclusive range of behaviors, a win/win bias: (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005)

- More creative thinking
- More accurate thinking
- More generative thinking
- Generation of personal resources for future demands
- More tolerant and inclusive thinking

For project managers seeking creative, innovative thinking under the pressure of deadlines, budgets and dynamic environments, generating positive emotions for team members and even for yourself improves performance.

Conclusion

We know that for senior project managers to consistently deliver successful projects in a complex environment, they must have superior technical skills and project management expertise. We believe that they must also be expert in the "soft stuff" - masters of interpersonal management skills which get results – and help both people and projects flourish.

This paper reported on theory, empirical research, and practical applications that have successfully been tested with senior Project Managers. We demonstrated that key business drivers and key team behaviors central to effective project management can be improved_by incorporating behaviors supportive of engagement; strengths-based management; optimism,

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resilience, and hope; and positive emotions. When all of these characteristics are combined to create a Positive Workplace environment, you have created high performance project teams that improve productivity, profitability, and both employee and customer satisfaction.

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