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The Case For Purpose In Career Development



For many people, finding their purpose or “why” leads them to their long-term career pathway

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Careers, like people, are not made in exactly one way. We all know people who knew precisely what they wanted in their career right from the get-go, but they tend to be the exception to the rule. In fact, [studies](#) show helping employees align purpose with work is essential to increase engagement and create a culture of learning at work.

For many people, finding their purpose or “why” leads them to their long-term career pathway. Then, it is up to each individual to learn and up to engaging workplaces to offer training that promotes the continued acquisition of skills throughout each person’s career. The work takes time, but when it aligns with purpose, it becomes energizing instead of taxing.

This certainly resonates, and Simon Sinek’s best-selling book “Start With Why” certainly proves this point. But, figuring out a personal ‘why,’ let alone finding a company or industry whose purpose aligns well with that purpose, can seem daunting. There are a few questions to ask in order to identify a personal career purpose.

- What are your intrinsic strengths?
- What interests would you like to explore?
- What can you contribute to the world and how does this align with personal fulfillment?

Annual Gallup polls show that many people are not especially engaged in their work. In fact, the most recent statistic showed only **36% of employees are engaged at work**. One reason for this could be that their purpose is unrelated to their current position—and it could even be something they never considered doing.

Understanding common career myths and taking an introspective look at career ruts can help employees identify purpose and then engage in training to build skills needed to get to the career they want. Some common myths about purpose include:

- Purpose is unchanging
- Purpose must always be altruistic
- One’s career purpose is their identity

These myths, and many others, can stump a person who is trying to figure out what skills to develop and how to develop their career. Throughout careers, the specifics of career purpose can change over time, while some key overall goals tend to remain steadfast. Once myths are recognized for what they are, it becomes easier to chart a career path and determine how training can get employees from being in a rut to being engaged.

For employers, it’s important to identify the skills needed to achieve business goals, and then invest in people to help build and strengthen those skills. At the same time, since most jobs don’t happen in a vacuum, people, and therefore trust, play an important role in professional development.

There are common elements for a company that establishes trust from its leaders and throughout the organization: The team has fun, performs better, and brings forward some new approaches to solving problems for customers. Not everything works, but the initiatives that do work generate revenue and help organizations become wildly successful market leaders.

With the great resignation continuing, as people look for their next roles, or if they are in an interview setting, asking leaders how they build trust and invest in training can be very telling and help identify an engaging work environment. This information, combined with a clear understanding of personal purpose, can lead to a powerful career path that promotes continuous learning, skills development, and engagement for the long term.

Author Bio



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