

Executive Book Review:
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The Why Of work

HOW GREAT LEADERS BUILD
ABUNDANT ORGANIZATIONS
THAT WIN



Meet the Authors

Dr. David Ulrich is a professor of business, and is considered by some as being the father of modern day human resources. Ulrich's research focus has been devoted to developing effective leadership strategies in human resources. His research reflected 40 000 respondents' thoughts on the elements needed for effective human resources leaders. All Ulrich's experiences come from a research paradigm (Wikipedia, 2012).

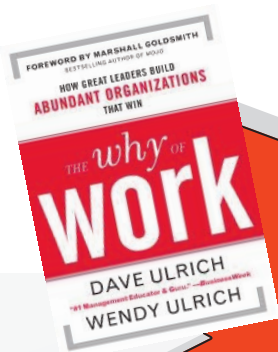
Dr. Wendy Ulrich, the spouse of Dr. David Ulrich, is a practicing psychologist with a background in psychodynamic, cognitive, and family therapy. Wendy Ulrich's focus examines the impact of self-blame in people's lives. Wendy's understanding is from the mental health profession (Amazon, 2012).

The husband-wife duo seek to offer assistance to organizations through their research of surveying workers, but does research translate into practice? Let's find out . . .

A Brief Examination of The Why of Work

Imagine a world where every employee felt a purpose and authentically felt that their work was valued and meaningful; what would this organization look like? The authors, Ulrich and Ulrich (2012), painted a picture of this euphoric establishment, which they called an *abundant organization*. In order to create this organization, the authors offered leaders advice on how they can nurture and influence employees to create a positive climate. This climate is created through collaboration, where employees' engagement is highly valued.

A leader can reach this *abundant organization* by a soul-searching, almost spiritual experience of answering the *Seven Questions That Drive Abundance*. These questions essentially take emotional and spiritual elements that are traditionally dichotomized and put them back into work. Organizations with this holistic approach have a workforce that is competent, committed, and that contributes positively, but most importantly, these employees love to come to work!



Advertisement:

Do you need The Why of Work?

1. Is your work monotonous?
2. Are your employees bored at work?
3. Does your work feel meaningless?
4. Are you feeling less than inspired?

If you answered yes to the following questions, then this book is for you:

Making Sense of this Summary:

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>The Case for Meaning</i>	2
<i>Seven Questions That Drive Abundance</i>	3-11
<i>Critique</i>	12
<i>Application</i>	12



The Case for Meaning

Show Me The . . . Meaning?

Why do you head to work? Of course, my first answer was for dough, the mulla, the dine-ro, or the reality of simply paying bills. According to Ulrich and Ulrich (2010), we do not head to work for the money, but for meaning. What's this concept of meaning all about?

Meaning is the sense that your life is rich and full. The sensations of happiness or euphoria comes from having a purpose, which is recognized legitimately as being valued. Since the workplace is where most of us spend the majority of our time, it should be the primary setting to capitalize on adding meaning to work. How can this happen?

Work solves real problems, which provides a sense of accomplishment and meaning in employees' lives. The authors contended that meaning has market value, which can increase the assets of an organization. If employees find meaning in their work, they work harder, dedicate more time, and do a better overall job. With this aura of happiness and hardworking individuals, the stakeholders and consumers will in turn be more satisfied with the service and will be more content with the organization. It is more than dollars, it is all about the "sense" and seeing the bigger picture. It is basic common sense to realize that a happy employee is going to work harder for the organization. If it is the human quest to search for a purpose that will define us and fill the soul with value, why not empower the employees with this rich, full feeling?

Did You Know?

- Eight to 10 percent of Americans suffer some form of depression.
- A shocking 50 percent of employees stated that they have thought about quitting in the last 6 months!
- 72 percent of employees left their last job because they felt they were undervalued in their last position.
- In research from the United Kingdom, they found that only 51 percent of employees feel fully engaged.

PARADIGM To The Why of Work



1. Individuals who find work meaningful are more competent, committed, and contributing.
2. If you have competent, committed, and contributing employees, it leads to increased overall satisfaction of the system.
3. If there is increased satisfaction, then there are better results or profits.

Utopia or a Work Place?

Envision an occupation where you could:

- Play foosball and pool
- Get your car washed while at work
- Do your laundry
- Get your hair done
- Wear your pajamas
- Lounge on couches
- Bring your pets
- Eat at 11 gourmet restaurants
- Exercise at a Fitness Centre
- Rollerblade around the facilities
- Swim in a lap pool
- Visit a doctor
- Get a massage

AND ALL FOR FREE!!!!!!

This is a reality, and this organization not only has employees that are having fun and enjoy being at work, but the company was rated by Fortune Magazine as being

the best company to work for. They receive 3000 applications a day and one million applications a year to work for their company!

It sounds like all fun and games, but their company experienced vast margin growths and acquisitions. Beyond these financial gains, it has employees who can easily boast that they love their work, who are loyal and are dedicated to the organization. The most intriguing report was that the employees found work engaging. Google recognizes that employees need 20 percent of the time to work on their passions, and obviously it is successful, look at the results.

"When we find meaning in our work, we find meaning in life".



An Abundant Organization

Abundance is . . .

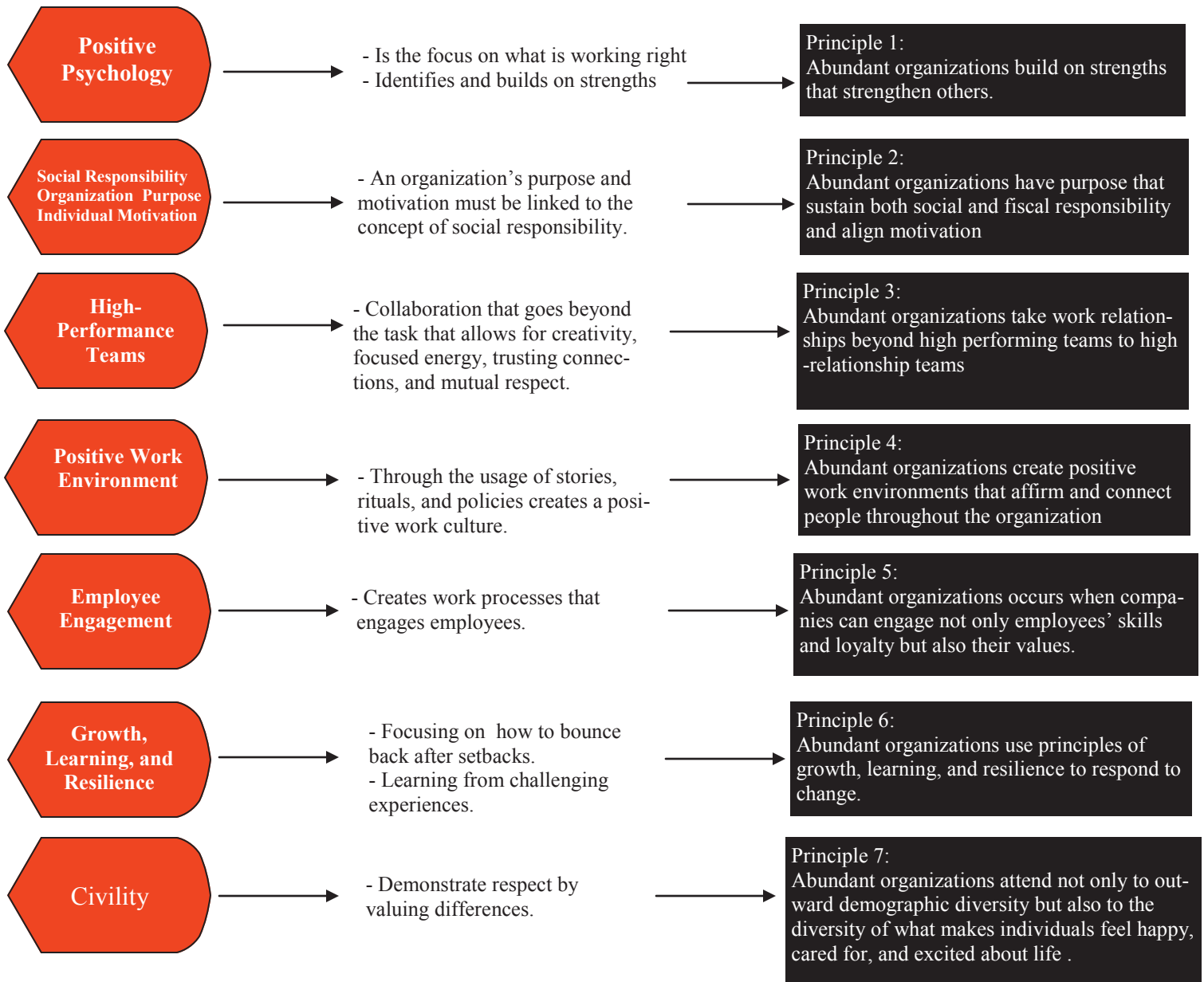
- Made by people.
- Personal value people place on events and how positively we interpret those events.
- Where we are active agents in our own lives.
- Looking into future opportunities.
- Fostering creativity, hope, resilience, determination, resourcefulness, and leadership
- Focus on opportunity and synergy
- Profitable!



Abundance is *not* . . .

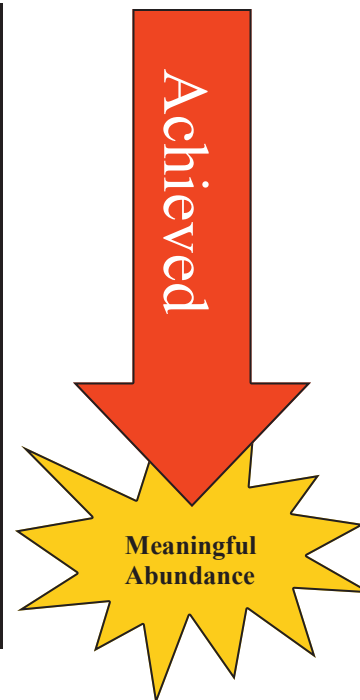
- Giving more work.
- Found in a situation or circumstance.
- How big our raise may be.
- Inherent in events.
- How many report to us.
- Looking at past disappointments.
- An easy process without challenges.
- Focusing on fears .

Components of Abundance



Questions that Lead to Abundance

Identity: What am I known for?
Purpose and Direction: Where am I going?
Teamwork: Whom Do I Travel With?
Engagement: What Challenges Interest Me?
Effectice Connections: How do I Build a Positive Work Environment?
Resilience: How do I Learn from Change?
Civility and Delight: What Delights Me?



Assessment Time

Do you need abundance in your organization? Find out by taking Ulrich and Ulrich's (2009) Assessment of Individual Abundance.

Principles of Abundance	Personal Abundance Questions <i>(To what extent)</i>	Assessment 1= Low 5= High
What am I known for?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have a clear identity at work with which I feel comfortable? 2. Use my strengths to contribute at work? 	
Where am I going?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Feel invested in the direction of the organization? 2. Feel that my personal goals are in line with the organization's vision? 	
Whom do I travel with?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foster teamwork that delivers creativity? 2. Pay attention to the emotional needs of my team? 	
What challenges interest me?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Find ways to organize the work around enjoyable challenges? 2. Have skills to be effective at work? 	
How do I build a positive work environment?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use my time to build affirmation and connect with others? 	
How do I learn from change?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recover when things go wrong? 	
What delights me?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have fun at work? 2. Promote friendly interactions at work? 	



Let's become abundant! Take the step-by-step self-reflection journey through answering the *Seven Questions that Drive Abundance*.

Question #1:

What am I Known For?

Have you ever been asked, "How would your colleagues or friends describe you?" Have you ever wondered, "How are people going to remember me?". Ulrich and Ulrich contend that leaders are meaning makers that set the direction for the rest to aspire to, and invest into practices that develop how people think, act, and feel. Therefore, it is part of the leader's role to help employees shape the meaning of their lives, but too often leaders focus on where they are going and how to get there, without any thought of others on this journey.

Where does a meaning-maker begin? The first step is to gain an understanding of the *signature strengths*, character traits and values most central to who we are, that you as a leader possess, and most importantly the signature strengths that your staff possess. This process of establishing strengths should focus around a clear identity around what the organization is known for internally and externally. After this quest, it is important to align employee strengths with the organization's identity. As a leader your role is to encourage staff engagement by focusing on key

individual strengths and encouraging those strengths in the organization.

Sounds easy enough, but the process requires communication, formal assessments, observations, and assignments to determine these signature strengths. After this lengthy process, the question is how are we going to use these skills to promote our organization's identity, and for some leaders, it even requires them to identify what our company is going to be known for, is it service, value, quality, etc. This first initial step creates the scaffolding for meaning for the rest of the employees. Not only will they know what they offer the company, they will know the overall vision for the company. One company that does this well according to CNN Money (2009) is Walt Disney. Not only do the employees know what they offer the company, but they are quite aware of the company's identity and how it wishes to be perceived among its costumers. Now it is your turn to answer, "What are you known for?".

"Great leaders help individuals align their personal strengths with the organization identity"

Identity Match

Match the following companies with their perceived public identity:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Hasbro | a.) Innovative |
| 2. Tom Tom Shoes | b.) Value |
| 3. IKEA | c.) Service |
| 4. UPS | d.) Family orientated |
| 5. McDonald's | e.) Caring |
| 6. Apple | f.) Environmentally conscious |

How to Build an Organization's Identity: (Leader Checklist)

- Develop employee awareness of their signature strengths.
- Define your organization's strengths.
- Make sure strengths and organizational goals are aligned.
- Determine what is expected from the organization.
- Connect identity with the people who it serves.

Where am I going? Purpose and Motivation

We all need clarity about where we want to go, because this gives work meaning. Clarity answers “What do I live for?” and “Where am I headed?”. These questions are not exact locations, but a vision that calls us. A vision, or direction, allows for workers to be passionate.

There are four places to go, purposes or motivation, which are insight, achievement, empowerment, and connection. The following frame reveals the four purposes:

Focus on Accomplishment	Focus on Relationships	
	Achievement	Empowerment
	Insight	Connection

The frame demonstrates that employees have different motivators for wanting to achieve; we are not all motivated by the same goals in life. Individuals who are motivated by insight find drive in learning, creativity, thoughtfulness, and a deep appreciation of ideas. While others may find motivation or drive in achievement, where

they find meaning in accomplishing tasks. Empowerment is when employees are motivated by social responsibility and possess the want to aid others. The final quadrant, connection, is where motivation is found in interactions with people and there is a focus on developing meaningful relationships.

It is the leader’s role to motivate and bring meaning to their colleagues’ work by helping them identify in which quadrant of the frame they will be most motivated. It is the process of finding a *good fit* between what motivates employees and the organization’s purpose.

Ulrich and Ulrich (2009) believed that a leader must have moderate efficiency in all the four quadrants. This proficiency is needed because, if all your motivation is in one quadrant, then the focus may be purely on accomplishment and be very low on social relationships or vice versa. It is important that the leader be well-rounded and be motivated in achievement, insight, empowerment, and connection. It is necessary to be focused on both accomplishment and relationships, because they are holistically linked and it will create a more efficient and understanding leader.

“In a world of information overload and centrifugal goals, employees and organizations often spin away from their basic sense of purpose and direction. Great leaders recognize what motivates employees, match employee motivators to organization purposes, and help employees prioritize work that matters most.”

How to Aid Define a Purpose:

(Leader’s Checklist)

- Help employees recognize if they are motivated by insight, achievement, connection, or empowerment.
- Match individuals' motivation with the organizational task they are to perform.
- Help prioritize tasks that are important to do well.
- Have a socially responsible agenda and translate that agenda into individual action.

What Motivates You?

Which quadrant will best suit you? Using the following responses, which are you more likely to agree with?

1. I will work harder if I am working with a partner.
2. I will work harder if I know it will benefit someone else.
3. The quest of discovering an answer makes me want to work harder.
4. I enjoy working, so I can cross an item off my to-do list.

Answers: 1– Connection, 2– Empowerment, 3– Insight, and 4– Achievement.

Whom Do I Travel With?

(Relationships and Teams [Th]at Work)

An effective leader's role is to foster friendships at work, why is this? The workplace is a collaborative environment built on a team effort. When this team is working at high-functioning capacity, it will yield better results for the company. It would only stand to reason that a leader must aid colleagues in making friends, building strong teams, resolving conflicts, and building relationships of trust.

It is necessary for any leader to develop the *five basic skill sets for positive relationships*, which are explored in the table below. If a workplace has successfully developed these relationship bonds, it allows for a more positive workplace climate. High-performing employees come *from high-relating people!*

Did You Know?
Employees who have best friends at work are:

- Seven times more likely to be highly engaged.
- Twice as likely to be satisfied with their pay.
- 27 percent more likely to see their strengths aligned with the company's goals.
- Are more likely to satisfy customers, get more work done in less time, have more fun, have few accidents, and share more ideas.

As individuals adopt these skills [Five Basic Skill Sets], leaders emulate them, teams adopt them, and organizations foster them, the magic fairy dust of human connection can increasingly sprinkle down on the practical world of work."

Five Basic Skill Sets For Positive Relationships

- MAKE AND RESPOND TO BIDS**
-responding to requests for attention, such as answering questions, assisting, and extending warm welcomes
- LISTEN AND SELF-DISCLOSE**
- ability to share thoughts, feelings, and experiences
- NAVIGATE PROXIMITY**
-the balance of collaboration and individuality
- RESOLVE CONFLICT**
-the ability to solve situations among personnel
- MAKE AMENDS**
- the development of resolving and restitution

Fostering Relationships and Teams
(Leader's Checklist)

- Develop and encourage good friendships at work.
- Learn, train, and model listening skills and resolving conflict skills.
- Apply these skills among work relationships.

How Do I Build a Positive Work Environment?

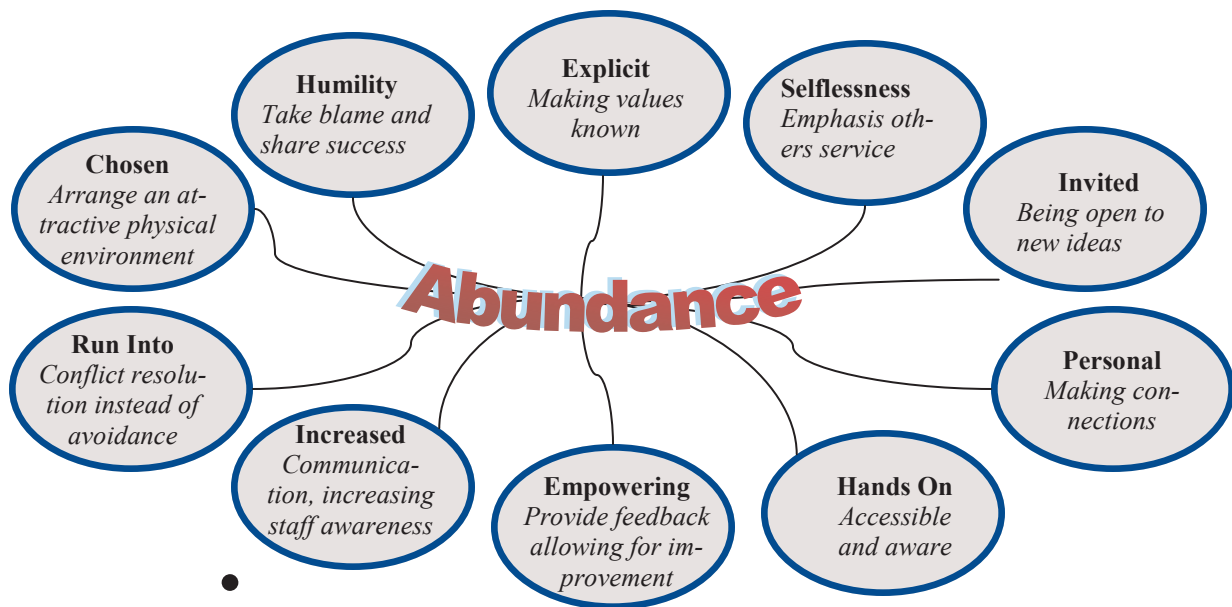
(Effective Work Culture or Setting)

A positive work environment does not occur by accident, but is intentional and thoughtfully built. It does not magically appear, but needs effort for it to develop. Ulrich and Ulrich outlined ten attitudes that facilitate an abundant work environment. It is the leader's goal to pursue the attributes to make a positive work environment for all.

How long does it take to get a feel for an organization's atmosphere?

Seconds to Minutes

Attitudes for a Positive Work Environment



Positive Work Environment in Action:

- Employees are committed, productive, and likely to stay with the company.
- Customers feel a positive aura from workers and are more likely to do business with the company.
- Investors have more confidence in the future of the organization.
- The organization's reputation in the community is enhanced.

Creating a Positive Work Environment
(Leader's Checklist)

- Be aware of the work environment patterns.
- Regularly monitor the work environment utilizing a rubric/ checklist.
- Ask newcomers about aspects of the work culture.
- Make public statements about the importance of a positive work environment.

What Challenges Interest Me?

Personalized Contributions

When work is plain old work, and the monotony is an ever growing presence; employees have become disconnected from work. The missing ingredient is personalized contributions, where employees are aware of how their efforts contribute to the overall vision of the organization. The secret is that these contributions must matter to the employee.

The flowchart demonstrates the process that a leader must undertake in order to create challenges that not only interest employees, but most importantly add value to their contribution. It can be easy to say “what can I do”, but one interesting feature is that Ulrich and Ulrich (2009) offer leaders numerous options to offer employees to personalize their contributions. Not only can leaders alter the type of work, but they can also manipulate other factors such as where does the work take place to how the work will be completed. Employees are unique and a one size fits all plan, not only contradicts this pedagogy, but demeans the employee. What would it take to interest you in your work?

Is it easy, energizing, or enjoyable?

Understand What Outcomes Matter to the Employee

Create a Connection Between Actions and Being Able to Achieve Outcomes

Help Employees Find Intrinsic Value in Their Work

Shaping Work Conditions to Offer Abundance

Manipulative Variables:

- Type of work: Intellectual, physical, and relational
- Location of work: Remote location, office, indoors, outdoors, domestic, or international
- The Process: Innovative, autonomy, Opportunity, or visibility
- When: Flexibility, time audit, or satisficing

- Personalized Contributions to Work**
(Leader's checklist)
- Know what outcomes matter to employees.
 - Discuss with employees the intrinsic value of work and what they enjoy about their work.
 - Create conditions that appeal to employees.
 - Make connections between employee's assignments and outcomes they value.

“Beyond the level of challenge, people want to work at the type of challenge they care about and under the conditions that make the challenge enjoyable.”

How Do I Respond to Disposability and Change?

Growth, Learning, and Resilience

Yes, the inevitable will occur; initiatives will come, and they will go, but it is how the leader reacts to these changes that determines success. An *abundant response* allows for growth, learning, and resilience. Instead of focusing on the negative aspects, an abundant leader would use the situations as learning opportunities and become resilient against the negative effects.

What do we do if the old techniques are not working? It requires two principles, *generate and generalize*. *Generate* is when leaders encourage learning and new ways of doing things. *Generalize* is the ability to transfer ideas from one area to another.

Life is always changing, as is work. It requires an insightful leader who is always working on *continuous improvement*. If an employer is continually working on the betterment of the organization, the courage and the ability of resilience is an important piece to the puzzle. Resilience is the capacity to

bounce back and try again when challenged by change. Resilience can happen when leaders have an optimistic outlook, possess a strong moral code, manage risk, are attuned to patterns, and face risks or fears head-on.

How can an organization as a whole be resilient? It requires open communications where the unspeakable becomes a discussion, making real understanding and empathy occur. The process also requires a commitment to the change process. If a leader wants to implement changes, it is necessary to run the course. Finally, change is not about a single event, it is about creating a new pattern.

Change happens, it is not about the change, but all about the response. It is not solely the response of the leader that matters, but the response from the organization as a whole.

“Change happens.”
(Ulrich and Ulrich, 2009, p.185)

Leader's Self-Reflection

How resilient are you? Try the following reflection to become more self-aware of how you handle situations.

- How readily do I bounce back from setbacks?
- How consistently do I show an optimistic attitude?
- How well do I act from a strong moral code?
- How well do I see patterns and put events into context?
- How well do I know when it is time to move on?
- How well do I work at an appropriate level of risk?

Actions to Facilitate Growth, Learning, and Resilience (Leader's Checklist)

- Be positive about change.
- Go through the process of self-reflection, experimenting, boundary spanning, and continuous improvement when thinking about a new idea.
- Learn how to share new ideas by sharing information, building incentives, and creating new talent pools.
- Develop resiliency against challenges.



Question #7

What Delights Me?

Civility and Happiness



Four Sources of Delight

A leader can utilize these elements to create a workplace full of delight:

<i>Creativity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know and feel alive • Curiosity and reflection • Doing something you have never done before
<i>Pleasure</i>	<p><i>Things that are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deeply meaningful • Deeply engaging • Simply feel good about them
<i>Humor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes serious work more palatable • Creates a positive atmosphere
<i>Playfulness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invites creativity • Encourages irreverent questions and fresh approaches
<i>Civility</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes of appreciation • Little acts of kindness • Basic kindness • Smiling and friendly

DELIGHT IS...

- noticing the little things.
- breaking out of ruts.
- about beauty.
- appreciating others

Your Turn!!!

Number a sheet of paper from one to ten. Now list all the things you can do to make work more pleasurable, but it has to be \$20 or less. GO!

"Employees who find delight at work are often employees who stick around, who make a difference, and who invest their discretionary energy in the creative and challenging aspects of work."

Actions to Foster Delight: (Leader's Checklist)

- Find ways to delight yourself and colleagues through creativity, gratification, humor, and civility.
- Test the connection between employee delight and customer satisfaction.

A Neophyte's Analysis

Are you a quodophile, a person with a crush on quotes? If so, this book is for you! Ulrich and Ulrich offer the reader all inspiring quotes like “when we find meaning in work, we find meaning in life”, but behind the portrait perfect language, what is left? The message itself is common sense, of course, employers will have harder working employees if they are happier and motivated, but does the reader need 273 pages to reiterate this point? The message seemed to be redundant and repetitive, but hidden in beautiful inspirational quotes.

Behind the glitter and shimmer, the concept that work is not a mechanical structure void of spirit and emotion, but is built on human emotions and motivation is a profound construct. Ulrich and Ulrich lay the directions in establishing this abundant organization where employees’ contributions and strengths are valued. The guide’s paradigm and step-by-step instructions are simple enough, but humans are not one dimensional creatures. What motivates an individual one day may not motivate them the next. Humans are ever evolving in their values and motivations, is it a plausible reality that one leader or Human Resources staff could possibly know all the employees strengths and motivations, and yet tie them into the organization’s identity and purpose? This guide is not realistic, but does offer an important paradigm for leaders to begin their initial efforts of a holistic approach instead of a dichotomous state, where humans can only be human at home.

Overall, the book, The Why of Work, does provide a thought provoking framework, although there is some skepticism of the practical application to the everyday work place. It does offer leaders an initial guidance to begin this complex journey of putting the meaning in work. “There are two mistakes one can make along the road of truth . . . not going all the way and not starting” (Buddha, n.d.).

“Meaning should be a real option for every worker who values it . . . It matters not only for the profit of investors and the need of customers but also for the heart and souls of the millions of people who get up and go to work every day.”

Does Making Meaning Work?

- A significant link between teachers’ satisfaction and school performance was found. The higher the satisfaction, the better students’ behavior and academic achievement.
- A study by Watson Wyatt Worldwide found that the higher the employee commitment equaled higher total returns.
- A Sears’ study demonstrated that when employees were happy with their jobs, their behavior was more positive with costumers.
- The evidence demonstrated that employee engagement and job performance are related!!! (Stein et al., 2009)

Application Time

Can Ulrich and Ulrich’s paradigm be applied to schools? Yes, it most definitely has application to the school organization. A school has an identity that is projected into the community, as a leader what do you want that image to be? How will you achieve it? These quandaries are most applicable, and can strengthen a school’s vision.

Schools are filled with a wealth of resources, which are the people. How often do leaders undervalue this resource? Teachers are smart and well-educated, why not utilize this untapped resource to fulfill missions instead of looking outside the school for experts? Why not value what the staff is capable of and honor their value in the school?

With the social nature of schooling, some schools are quite successful in adding meaning into work. It is a feeling that is felt, an aura, as soon as you enter the school. It makes individuals wonder, “What’s missing in our schools? Why don’t we have it?” . There is acknowledgement that there is something absent, but what is *it*? It is the meaning of work, the overall feeling that your contributions matter. Instead of a focus on profits and margins, the school can strive for the development and gains of the most precious resource of all, our students.

Ulrich, D. and Ulrich, W. (2010). *The why of work: How great leaders build abundant organizations that win*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.