

THOUGHTS ON FULL ENGAGEMENT

By Kathleen Ryan

Today's organizations face tremendous challenges and opportunities that:

1. Cannot be effectively addressed in silos or through hierarchical dictates
2. Require relevant and diverse perspectives, skills, knowledge, and experiences of people, who are typically organized into groups of two to twenty
3. Need those group members to be highly motivated to make the work of their group a top priority

Increasingly, the first two points are understood and pursued. Unfortunately, many organizations fail at the third: taking the action that will inspire group members to fully commit themselves to the task at hand.

Without such engagement, members who juggle multiple priorities—at work and in their personal lives—will do enough to satisfy basic expectations of their performance. They are unlikely to put in the extra energy needed to bring their very best capability to the work of the group. With only partial engagement, tackling today's complex problems and opportunities becomes much more difficult.

Question: What can be done intentionally to secure the full engagement of any group's members?

Answer: Pay attention to a set of basic, and mostly unarticulated, needs that people bring with them when they join a group.

Within the peak group experiences that comprised the field study for Extraordinary Groups, six instinctive needs were revealed and made their way into what we call the Group Needs Model. The six can be divided into two familiar categories: Results and People, or Head and Heart.

Instinctive and Mostly Unarticulated Needs People Bring to Groups

RESULTS / HEAD	PEOPLE / HEART
To join with others to pursue a common Purpose	To get to know, build connections with, and Bond with others
To understand and accept the Reality within which the group pursues its Purpose	To gain skills, knowledge, and experience that will help someone grow into his or her Potential
To take action that makes a difference, that shows some kind Impact related to the group's Purpose	To find Acceptance of one's self as a worthy member of the group

When those involved in a group sense that some or all of these six needs are met, the result is, well... extraordinary. A strong commitment to a Purpose that makes a difference in the world encourages people to get to know each other and the Reality they face in pursuing the group's desired outcomes. Members willingly offer what they know and are respected and valued for their different expertise and perspective. Passionate debate and exploration of a wide range of ideas and possibilities replace conflict avoidance and doing-the-obvious. Through it all, people stretch themselves by learning lots: about new subjects, about each other, about themselves. They find new levels of confidence and pride in what they are able to accomplish together. When involved in such a group, there is no question members are highly motivated. They show up ready to work and bring their best selves and best capabilities to the task at hand.

All of our field study interviewees reported that at least three of these Group Needs were satisfied in their amazing experiences. In 90% of the cases, five or more were met. And as a result, libraries were built, software was developed, lives were saved, elections were won, military missions were accomplished, market share was gained, and millions of dollars were saved. People grew skills, build relationships, gained confidence, and increased their loyalty to the organizations that supported their group's amazing accomplishment. They were completely and fully engaged.

If you are an organizational leader and you utilize teams to get work done, pay attention to the six Group Needs outlined above. Support those in your organization who lead and facilitate groups. Give them the time and resources to understand new ways of focusing

and interacting so that this set of instinctive human needs can be met as groups in your organization do their work. For a strategy that can accomplish so much, it is a relatively small investment to make.