

I my manager

Beating at the heart of high performing organisations are happy employees who have a positive outlook towards their employer. Engaged with their organisation's purpose and values, they're more productive and loyal. And, because they're a happy bunch, they're the best possible ambassadors for their business. All this positively impacting turnover and profit.

One of the most important ways to create engagement, even stronger than remuneration – is a positive relationship between a manager and their team. Managers are not just senior personnel, they're anyone who has direct responsibility for another person in the workplace, from post to board room. Frontline managers matter as much, if not more than senior leaders when it comes to rallying the troops. They have a tremendous power for good, or bad, over the daily lives of the people they lead.





The old cliché 'employees don't quit their companies, they quit their bosses' is as real as it ever was

'Bad boss' is still right up there as a reason for leaving. David MacLeod, Co-Founder of Engage for Success recently quoted a Forbes report that found 65% of workers in the US would rather have a new boss than a pay rise.¹ But in 2018 this perennial problem's shifted up a gear. This s**t just got real. Holding on to your people has never mattered more - we are literally running out of workers. According to the CIPD, "current employer plans suggest we will need to fill 13.5 million job vacancies in the next ten years, but only seven million young people will leave school and college with the right skills to fill the gap". And that's without even factoring in the impact of the B word.

If people are leaving because of their managers, we need to do much more to help train, engage and support line managers and we need to do it now. Woodreed is increasingly using neuroscience to help our clients understand how behaviour at work impacts others, drawing on the work of the leader in this field, Dr David Rock.² We're fascinated by his insights and how we can use them in particular to better train line managers.

In this, our latest thought piece, we share these insights and offer smart ideas for line managers to put into action, dramatically improving the way they manage at work. They'll help your managers create happy, healthy, innovative, super productive teams of people who love their manager and want to stay.

¹ Forbes Report 2012 forbes.com

² Dr David Rock - Director of the NeuroLeadership Institute - a global initiative bringing together neuroscience and leadership experts, building a new science for leadership development

But first, let's address that sabre-toothed tiger hiding in the stationery cupboard

We may live in a 21st century world, but our brains are still prehistoric in many ways, hard-wired to constantly be on the lookout for potential threats. When we find them the cortisol and adrenaline released sends us into a negative or 'away' state. Modern day life only seems to exacerbate it, having huge implications for us in our workplaces. Dr David Rock's ground-breaking research into neuroscience in the workplace reveals there are five elements - Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness and Fairness (collectively called **SCARF**) - that, when we feel under threat put us in the 'away' state. Conversely, when they're rewarded, we're in a positive or 'toward' state. Being in either the away or toward state has massive implications for our physiological and physical wellbeing - and our performance in the workplace.

UNRAVELLING THE SCARF AT WORK

Status or self-esteem

It's not about ego. It's about self-perception and self-confidence. It's having a clear sense of purpose. "I feel cared for and know I'm respected by others."

Certainty

We are wired to predict. Our brain craves certainty. If not, we speculate, start overthinking things and move towards a threat response.

Autonomy

"Have I control over my life?" "Am I micromanaged?" "Am I involved?" "Do I have a great manager?" You can't give people total control, but as a manager what freedom of thought and action can you give them?

Relatedness

"Am I in the team or out of it?" "Are you friend or foe?" Sociability and social connections are hugely important - we need to connect with others. Survival is about being part of a group, building winning teams.

Fairness

What is fair? Fairness, a sense of equity, is deeply rooted in us from our earliest years. How many times do you remember saying "it's not fair" to your parents? If you've got kids now, how often do you hear it from them? A perceived increase in fairness activates the same reward circuitry in our brains as receiving a monetary reward.

The impact of being in the away or toward state is not to be underestimated

Disengagement, stress and even a weakened immune system vs engagement, collaboration, innovation, strength and resilience.

Negative or away state	Positive or toward state
Weakened immune system	Strong and resilient
Mental health implications	Boosts serotonin and endorphin levels
Stress	Cared for and valued
Self-focus	Positive
Lack of control	More focused
Distracted	Willing to collaborate and get involved
Anxious	Innovative
Think less clearly	Creative
Memory loss	More caring for others
Poorer performance	Willing to learn
Disengagement	Engaged

How can you take this and adapt for your own workplaces?

There are plenty of ways a manager can create a positive relationship with their team, playing to the positive elements of SCARF, keeping their people in the 'toward' state with all the benefits that brings. Here are just a few.



Small things matter.

Engaging the team doesn't necessarily mean making grand gestures. Saying thank you for a job well done works wonders

SCARF – Status



Keep talking!

Keep your team updated about what's happening in the business, in the team and about them as individuals. Even if you don't have the full story, tell people what you can, and be clear about when you'll update them next

SCARF – Certainty



Get to know the team.

What's important to them? What are their likes and dislikes? Ask how their child's first day at school was or if their partner's cold is better.

SCARF – Status and Relatedness



Listen, hear what they say.

Tap into employee voice (Engage for Success' 3rd enabler). Actively seek your team's thoughts, acknowledge them as central to solving your business challenges.

SCARF – Status and Relatedness



Make time for them.

Be available when your team needs you. Something seemingly trivial to you could be important to them.

SCARF – Status



Have fun - laugh with the team!

Having fun at work matters. Excitement and energy are signs of an engaged employee. If you're customer-facing, your customers are more likely to respond to an upbeat employee. Plus laughing has physical and psychological health benefits too, boosting self-confidence.

SCARF – Relatedness



**Actively support employees
in their development.**

Seek opportunities and find ways to help individuals grow and reach their goals. In a recent survey 65% of millennials said the opportunity for personal development was the most influential factor in their job choice.⁴

SCARF – Status and Certainty



Empower employees...

...to make decisions and take ownership. Trust them to do the right thing, supporting them when they seek advice.

SCARF – Autonomy



Provide the right tools.

Make sure people have everything they need to do the job to the best of their ability.

SCARF – Status and Certainty



Be flexible and fair.

A good manager should be open to new ideas and ways of working

SCARF – Fairness



Keep promises.

Good managers should do what they say they're going to do, when they say they're going to do it.

SCARF – Certainty



**Use your organisation's values and behaviours
to help you do all this.**

Leading by example and creating a culture of employees living your organisation's values.

⁴ The B Team/Virgin Unite: New ways of working

WIIFM? What's in it for my organisation?

Getting it right – what's in it for you, the manager?

A more stable team with less turnover and greater productivity. Improved people skills at a time when such skills are being increasingly valued (these 'hearts and minds' ideas will help those without a natural gift). A happier working environment with less absenteeism. More respect and loyalty in good and hard times. Personal popularity and more fun at work.

Plus, it's also good for your career. Recent studies from Engage for Success in both the public and private sector found that the better line managers engaged their teams, the higher their own performance ratings were.

Getting it right – what's in it for the business?

Organisations will keep their people for a start. In a world where we're running out of workers, keeping hold of yours is an imperative. Also, in a word – profit. Engaged employees have a real impact on the bottom line. Great line managers know that by improving the lives of their employees, they'll also improve bottom line results.

Like what you read? This is just the start. We've got some great tools and workshops available to help coach and train your line managers.

Get in touch with either Jo or Charlotte on 01732 424341 or email jo@woodreed.com.

About Woodreed

Woodreed is a specialist advertising agency that's been putting brand at the heart of internal communications since 1991. We use the tools, methodologies, insights and creativity that marketing teams use to engage consumers, but we use them to engage your existing and future employees.

Woodreed is driven by our ambition to make workplaces better places to be. We do this by using the power of brand.

Woodreed plans brands and helps shape company cultures using various research tools and methodologies as well as the latest technology platforms. We create and run employee and customer workshops and focus groups. Our in-house creative teams devise multi-channel comms campaigns designed to move people.

If you'd like to know more about Woodreed's proprietary approach to building brand-hearted cultures, **please call Jo or Charlotte on 01732 424341.**



26 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4AE

t: 01732 424341 e: jo@woodreed.com www.woodreed.com

[@TunWellsWoodies](https://twitter.com/TunWellsWoodies)

©Woodreed Creative Consultancy Ltd