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DEEPAK CHOPRA, AUTHOR, *THE SOUL OF LEADERSHIP*



The Positive Leader

How energy and happiness
fuel top-performing teams

Jan Mühlfeit and Melina Costi

Praise for *The Positive Leader*

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// Inspired, thought-provoking and easy to apply. Based on Jan's own authentic approach, this book shows leaders how to plug into the power of positivity to bring out the very best in themselves and others. Learn valuable lessons about strengths, purpose, energy management and, of course, happiness. Classic Jan!! He is the real deal, and so is this book!

ORLANDO AYALA, CORPORATE VICE PRESIDENT, CHAIRMAN OF EMERGING MARKETS, MICROSOFT CORPORATION

// The impact of positivity and authenticity in leadership. Jan Mühlfeit has put his finger on a real game changer here.

FRANK BROWN, CHIEF OPERATION OFFICER, GENERAL ATLANTIC

// The cornerstone of world-class success and happiness is self-awareness. This book addresses the most important decision you will ever make: to uncover who you are and offer your best to the world.

DAVID SVOBODA, ATHELETE, 2012 OLYMPIC CHAMPION IN MODERN PENTATHLON

// Jan's guide to achieving sustained success and happiness is an inspirational reminder of the true qualities of modern leadership. *The Positive Leader* is both a practical handbook and a thoughtful reflection on what it takes to helm organisations in an increasingly complex world.

JEAN-PHILPE COURTOIS, EVP AND PRESIDENT, MICROSOFT GLOBAL SALES, MARKETING AND OPERATIONS, MICROSOFT

YOUR REASON FOR DOING

Your mission is the most direct route to making your highest dreams (or visions) a reality, acting as your conscious 'call to action'. It brings a laser-like focus, commitment and intention to what you do on a daily basis and determines the valuable difference you can make in your life. As you'll see in the next chapter, having a vision – an ultimate end result – is crucial for inspiring yourself and others to reach for bigger, grander things . . . but it's through your mission that you actually make it all happen. So why not make the journey to get there an enjoyable one?

Everyone has a purpose, a mission in life, but masses of us don't even realise it. You might feel like you don't have one right now . . . but of course you do. The thing is, nobody else can tell you what it is; you need to work it out for yourself. After all, only you know in your heart what's most important to you. You can't simply hope that the right job, the right employer, the right lifestyle or relationships will be handed to you on a plate. In the Western world, we're faced with a mind-boggling number of choices in how we live our lives. Until you narrow down your mission in a meaningful way, you'll be like a modern-day nomad wandering about hoping to 'discover your true self' and start building your life, but without any sort of map or blueprint to construct it from. Chances are you'll end up in the wrong district, disappointed and dissatisfied, and way out of sight of your reason for existence.

Once you decide which choices are most likely to bring you happiness, everything – achievement, gratification – becomes easier. Your mission gives you the solid framework you need for all your decisions and actions, both the day-to-day ones and the metamorphic, life-changing ones. You're clear on why you exist and what you need to do. Gone is the frustration and self-doubt and you begin to feel (perhaps for the first time) that you're fully in charge of your life.

Benefits of having a mission

Crafting a mission based on good, healthy principles brings scores of benefits in that it:

- refocuses your energy on personal priorities and passions
- provides a basis for making major, life-directing decisions

- allows you to develop the strengths and personal qualities that will unlock your full potential
- identifies the obstacles that are blocking you from achieving your goals
- acts as an invisible hand to guide you
- keeps you working in line with your core values and beliefs
- offers a compass for smaller daily decisions in the midst of fluctuating circumstances, stressful conditions and high emotions
- makes it easier to flow with changes
- gives you permission to say no to distractions
- rids you of the need to have everything figured out and categorised. You don't need prejudgements, prejudices or assumptions to accommodate reality when you're living by your mission.²

For your mission to be wholly engaging and energising it must be what *you* want. This may seem 'duh' obvious, but far too many people fall into the trap of doing what's expected of them or what they think they should do to match other people's achievements. Rachel might train to be a doctor to follow in her father's footsteps, or Philippe might start his own business in the hope of keeping up with his entrepreneurial peers. Focus on what's right for you, not for anyone else. If you allow someone else to set your mission or base it on superficial reasons (like money, ego, power or fame), the intrinsic drive just isn't there. You're letting your goals come from the outside, rather than from within, so any motivation and satisfaction you feel will be short-lived. Choose your mission for yourself and you'll be all the more ready to go out and get it, and more importantly, commit to it.

Job vs career vs calling

When it comes to creating a happy and purposeful life, how we perceive the work we do can actually matter more than the work itself. Research on workers

² The Community. 'Business mission statements'. Stephen R. Covey [Online] Available from: <https://www.stephencovey.com/mission-statements.php>

in every conceivable occupation by Yale psychologist Dr Amy Wrzesniewski and her colleagues reveals that we tend to have one of three 'work orientations' (or mindsets) about our work.³ We either experience it as a job, a career or as a calling:

- **Job:** People with a 'job' see work as a chore, a means to an end, with the focus being on getting paid at the end of the week or month to support their lifestyle outside of work. They work because they have to rather than for personal fulfilment or the betterment of the company/society, and their work is kept strictly separate from their personal lives. These individuals 'do the job' but perceive little meaning in the daily drudgery and can't wait to clock off for the weekend or holidays.
- **Career:** People who are on a career path are driven by the need to advance and succeed. These people are happiest when they're 'winning' and look forward to the next jump in the hierarchy, raise or any other opportunity to step up their power or prestige. Careers with a clear 'upward ladder' are appealing to those with this orientation, and they tend to rate themselves by what rung they're on in relation to their colleagues and peers. They'll willingly make sacrifices for the company if it means they get that office on the top floor! Though engaged, they can quickly become dissatisfied if they're not forging ahead at the pace they want.
- **Calling:** People with a calling view work as a positive end in itself; they love what they do and their eyes light up when they talk about it. The external rewards (money and advancement) are still important, but they're mainly motivated by intrinsic reasons. Their work is a form of self-expression and personal gratification, and it's viewed as a privilege rather than a chore. People with this orientation are more likely to feel that their work draws on their personal strengths, is connected to their personal values and contributes in some small way to the greater good – like the janitor who sees his role as making the workplace/hospital/school a cleaner, healthier space for others. Or the worker on the assembly line who imagines people enjoying the products she is making. Folk with a calling will go to the 'next level' to adapt their duties and develop relationships to make their work even more meaningful and satisfying.

³ Wrzesniewski, A., McCauley, C. R., Rozin, P. and Schwartz, B. (1997) 'Jobs, careers, and callings: People's relations to their work'. *Journal of Research in Personality*, **31**, pp. 21–33.

Fascinatingly, these orientations play out in all manner of professions, from hospital cleaners, hairdressers and clerks to engineers, CEOs, doctors and salespeople. Most are fairly evenly divided – with about a third of workers falling into each category.

Wrzesniewski's research found that those with a calling orientation report higher satisfaction with their lives and work, and are more likely to 'craft' their jobs to fit their strengths and interests. A *positive mindset* is key. People with a calling feel good about what they're doing, no matter what it is. This is fortunate as it's not always easy to discover what sort of work can yield greater satisfaction and wellbeing. But we're all able to *choose* how we view our employment and cultivate greater feelings of engagement in what we do. People who focus on the negatives of their work – the deadlines, the pressure, the slog – miss out on the positive opportunities right in front of them. A calling orientation represents a 'portable benefit' for those with a positive outlook in that they can bring meaning and pleasure to a variety of work experiences.⁴ They can find delight even in the most ordinary and unglamorous daily tasks, like mopping the floor or making cups of tea.

And here's something even better about people with callings – not only are they happy and fulfilled, they're often super-successful too. By giving more to their work in terms of passion and ability, they get more back from it, including financial rewards. At this point of the book, it's no secret that we often perform best at the things we find most engaging. In pursuing work that gives us meaning and pleasure, not only does our motivation increase, so do our strengths and skills – and with that our success.

Recognising your own orientation towards your work is the start to defining what you need and want in your professional life. For one, it can help you find ways to motivate yourself and craft a better work mission without having to change jobs. You don't have to blow up everything that already exists to live a better life, tempting though it may be when you're under constant stress and strain! Sometimes it's just a case of making a few small changes, such as getting involved in more teamwork, re-adjusting your working hours or

⁴ Brooks, Katharine (2012). 'Job, career, calling: Key to happiness and meaning at work?' *Psychology Today*, 29 June. [Online] Available from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/career-transitions/201206/job-career-calling-key-happiness-and-meaning-work>

moving desks. At other times, a radical career change or fresh start is absolutely the right thing. You might have been climbing so fast up the professional ladder only to come to the realisation that it's leaning against the wrong wall. What then? A bit of self-reflection can help you make the switch to a new career or field that could well prove more satisfying. I found my calling as an authentic leader, strategist, coach and mentor when I began homing in on what I could do to inspire others to better their lives and the world around them, rather than losing myself in the never-ending scramble to hit the next performance target.

Exercise 4.1: Do you have a job, career or calling?

Do you see your current work as a job, a career or a calling?

Write a description of your typical workday and evaluate your activities according to how pleasurable, invigorating and meaningful they are. By zooming in on day-to-day tasks like this, you can identify important patterns in how you perceive your work. On the whole, are you looking at it through a lens of positivity or necessity? You can even ask the same question of work you've done in the past.

Take a moment to think about how your current work orientation affects your motivation and your overall career/life satisfaction. Does it impact on your desire to continue with your career or to find a new one?

If you need a bit of help determining your work preference, you can take the free 'Work-Life Questionnaire' developed by The University of Pennsylvania. Go to the Authentic Happiness site and select the quiz from the 'Questionnaires' drop-down list. It should only take a few minutes. (Note: you will be asked to register. Just create a username and password.)

Here's the link: <https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/>

How did you get on? Congratulations if you made it into the calling category. It means you've already found a strong sense of purpose and job satisfaction in what you're doing. If you see your work as merely a job or career and are mentally stuck on the grind not the gain, consider whether you need to change your outlook or priorities. Big improvements can be made by training yourself to obtain more feel-good 'flow'.

GETTING INTO THE 'FLOW'

A question for you:

Is there anything you do regularly that makes you lose track of time?

We all know what it feels like to be so utterly absorbed in doing something – completing a crossword puzzle, playing a sport, making music, writing a report, cooking a meal, gardening, closing a business deal, executing a project, painting a 'masterpiece' – that our sense of time disappears and we discover hours have flown by when it seemed like just minutes had passed. Our attention is focused entirely on what we're doing to the point that everything around us fades away, and we fail to hear the phone ringing or our name being called. Shockingly, we might even miss lunch! These energising, often joyful, experiences are what the brilliant psychologist with the difficult-to-pronounce name, Mihaly Csikzentmihalyi, termed *flow*.⁵

According to Csikzentmihalyi, people are happiest when they're in this state of flow, which he describes as 'being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost'.⁶ Athletes call it 'being in the zone' while artists label it 'aesthetic rapture'. The more you are in the flow or 'the zone', the more you are at your best – it's an optimal experience where you have:

1. **Complete involvement in what you're doing:** You have intense focus and sharp concentration, and aren't interrupted by unruly, wayward thoughts.
2. **Great inner clarity:** A translucent understanding of what you want to achieve and how well you're getting on.
3. **Active control over the situation and what you're doing:** You just seem to 'know' how to respond to whatever happens next and what the outcome will be.

⁵ Csikzentmihalyi, Mihalyi (1990). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: Harper and Row.

⁶ Geirland, John (1996). 'Go with the flow'. *Wired*. September, Issue 4. [Online] Available from: http://archive.wired.com/wired/archive/4.09/czik_pr.html