

Chapter 1:

The Big Idea.

"Without work, all life goes rotten. But when work is soulless, life stifles and dies." Albert Camus, French journalist and philosopher.

Monday morning: Eager to work.

Alex wakes up early Monday morning and slowly begins to stretch. He sees it's almost time to go to work. This thought infuses him with energy and excitement. In one swift movement, he gets up and jumps in the shower. He and his team have great things planned for today. There is a brainstorming session, a financial review, a team challenge, and an initiation ceremony. Alex begins to sing what he thinks is an opera aria in the shower. It's going to be that kind of day! His mind races, developing ideas for the team challenge. It will be a brilliant session with about ten coworkers with whom he feels privileged to work. They are smart, respectful, and extraordinarily skilled at their jobs. Together, they make an exceptionally high-caliber team.

On Thursday afternoon, Alex will be at a team's event. Each person in the organization belongs to a designated team. Every week, they compete for points in various events. People run, sing, solve puzzles, do challenges, and play games. This is one of the ways in which workers in

Alex's organization have a good time and become best friends. Even with playing, outstanding work is produced. Alex's organization constantly finds itself in the top ranks in patent creation, process innovation, and business financial results.

The organization is respected and appreciated. Its products and services are designed to improve the lives of people and directly benefit the community. It is no surprise that Alex's organization has a great following, with customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders actively participating in advancing the objectives of the organization and fostering its success.

There is nothing extraordinary about Alex's work. His job is just like any regular day at the office for you and me.

Not really, you say? Far from it? Perhaps it's been a while since you woke up in the morning and got in the shower singing, excited because you got to go to work that day. You may not remember the last time you wanted to stay at work out of enjoyment, not obligation or the lack of anything better to do. Your company may not be achieving the financial results described here, either.

Then allow me to ask this: Why couldn't this be your job or this your organization? Is it not possible?

If we were to work in such an organization, everyone would be better off. Workers would be healthier, live longer, and have better family relationships because it has been proven that satisfied and engaged workers do. Business owners and shareholders would reap higher profitability because it has been repeatedly shown that engaged workers not only produce more but also develop better and more creative innovations. Management would have a much easier job because it has been observed that engaged workers require little management. Everyone wants to be part of an organization that engages them, makes them feel proud, and constantly challenges them to become everything they can be.

Then, why doesn't it happen? What's missing? Instead, we are in a rat race that results in low job satisfaction, in business practices that create resentment with our communities and concerns with the environment, and in less-than-optimum business performance that often pushes companies into financial distress.

It doesn't happen because we are using the wrong approach. Nowadays, leading experts talk about motivation, organizational culture, job satisfaction, and engagement. We know now that organizations with these ingredients have more satisfied workers, persevere over changing market conditions, and exceed competition business results. We attempt to bring these missing ingredients to our organizations the same way an inexperienced chef adds salt to a cooked dish. The salt never becomes part of the dish! The goal of these organizations is the same: to get people to maximize profits, which eventually backfires and fails.

The business objective must be redefined. The reason for the business to exist must be to fulfill the needs of its workers. The business exists primarily to bring satisfaction and benefit to workers and their communities. One consequence of doing so, through the ways of the Driven Organization, is to have a powerful business machinery that overcomes its competitors and proves quite profitable.

Think about it! Imagine a classical composer who creates two pieces: a commercial one and one in which he poured his heart. Which one do you think he enjoyed creating the most? Which one will be the greater work?

Imagine two nannies. One believes that she is nurturing a future world leader, and the other one is solely concerned with the \$10 per hour pay. Which one enjoys her work more? Which one is better for the child? Although nothing is as black or white as these examples, the fact is that there are "things" that affect how close we feel to our work. If the work connects with our needs, with something deep inside us, our engagement will be much higher; we will be happier; and our product, the outcome of our work, will be much better. Yes, we need the money, but it is an additional, almost secondary consideration.

If this is so easy to see for an individual such as a composer or a nanny, why don't we see the same for an organization, assuming it is appropriate for it to exist solely to make money? This incorrect approach produces less-than-satisfied workers and low business performance. We must put the needs of all the organization's stakeholders as the main objective of the business, and we must make sure the work is deeply connected with these needs.

It is true that the problem becomes complex when we think of groups composed of many individuals with different needs, skills, beliefs,

and desires. How do we create a place that connects with all of them and makes them engaged? The purpose of this book is to help you understand how it works and why. After reading it, you will be able to build or transform your workplace into this organization that we call "The Driven Organization." You will see that it is not only possible but also easier than what it seems. There are many businesses already doing great advances in this area.

We can do so much better than today's business practices.

I grew up in a family of frustrated employees. I saw my parents, two well-intended and educated professionals, drown some of their biggest illusions and passions in their workplaces. I have wondered for many years how to make it better and I have taken that question with me through my academic formation and my business experience.

During this time, I have seen seeds and sparks of the Driven Organization here and there. I've seen great managers and small nimble companies (perhaps high-tech) that function in unorthodox ways and follow some of the ways of the Driven Organization. Rarely, there is an organization that understands its foundations and has structured a comprehensive system around it. Hardly ever, it is constructed so that the organizational activities support each other in an aligned manner, increasing exponentially its power. After many years, I have realized that creating such an organization is both more difficult and easier than what we think.

It is easy because some of the insights required are all around us. We simply must look at the needs and desires of workers, of managers, and owners, this is of human beings, which we all are. We will be able to draw some key conclusions from our own experiences, satisfactions, and frustrations throughout our work lives.

But to do so, we need common sense, which makes it a bit more complicated. Common sense is a skill that is developed from experience, observation, and self-reflection, but is not necessarily correlated with formal education. It's disappointing to see that some of the most educated professionals, such as doctors and lawyers, often display little of it. But something tells me we will be fine, considering that something prompted you to pick up this book.

What makes it difficult to create such a superior organization is that we have made it that way. We have developed beliefs that we never question, such as "the workday is from 8 to 5," "I am the boss; I know better," and "nobody likes to work; it is a necessary evil." We also use our working environments as tools to get away with certain negative behaviors, such as a way to accumulate power and belong to a superior class. The worst of it is that most of us consider it normal or even proper.

We have fought for democracy, for equal rights, for a voice and a vote, and for freedom. Then, we choose to make a huge exception for the activity that occupies the large majority of our time. Have you had to explain to yourself why working the whole day for years, doing something you do not find that appealing, all for a non-wealthy lifestyle, is that different from slavery? No, I am not trying to put the current system at the level of slavery, but to point out that often good workers feel this way, and when they do, they cannot be the best and most productive workers.

Productive systems evolve over time. Just as the feudal system was the most effective for its time and would be entirely unfit for today's needs and wants, capitalism is not standing still, either; it has evolved and will continue evolving. I believe that the organizations of the future will look progressively similar to the Driven Organization. As it so happens, they will cause a shift toward a better productive system that results in better quality of life for workers, communities, and other stakeholders, and higher and better business output.

If we are willing to question common business practices that make no sense, to use our experience as workers and human beings, and to appeal to our common sense, we have all it takes to start our path toward finding powerful ways to be happy, satisfied, and productive.

Attempting to fulfill "all" needs of workers.

The big idea of this book is so simple that I often questioned whether it still needs to be said. Sadly, the reality of our workplaces tells me it does. Organizations should attempt to satisfy all the needs of its workers; from the basic ones such as food and shelter, to those of higher levels such as life fulfillment and purpose. In doing so, workers and other stakeholders not only will be better fulfilled, happier, and engaged but also will produce superior results.

This book is for business owners, for line workers, for self-employed workers, and for everyone who performs work. We will all benefit by realizing how our job fits in our lives and what we need from it. We will all benefit by understanding the type of organization we can create, be it a 1,000 or 10,000 worker organization. We can all do it regardless of the level we have because each of us is a building block of the organization who has the capacity to move it forward toward a better place. No matter who you are, what you do, and with whom you do it, this book will help you reach your maximum potential at work, and thus improve your life.

I invite you to read with an open mind and see the possibilities, but I also ask you not to stop being critical because this work will be better understood if you perform constant sanity checks. I suggest you energetically reject what doesn't make sense, but in turn be brave to embrace what does.

This book is composed of five parts.

In the first part, we review and analyze current common business practices. Here, we put on our critical thinking caps. We ask questions. We compare. The objective is to bring forth our knowledge and common sense to study what we do at work and its effects. Here, we understand the problem, lack of engagement, and its consequences; and we contrast it with a Driven Organization and its capacity to affect the lives of its workers, communities, and shareholders. What is the potential of an engaged team? How to build a powerful brand? What is the role of money to create a great team? We will answer these questions in this first part.

In the second part, we explore our human needs as workers, managers, and customers. What do we want? What do we need? What tickles us? Using the most advanced psychological knowledge, but explained using simple stories and fables, we make sure that we get a solid understanding of this human being. We will understand what drives people and why we do what we do. We will also understand why we think differently from our parents and they from theirs.

Then, in the third part, supported by solid business insights, we create an organization specifically designed to connect with this human being, to fulfill his needs, and to form a cohesive group. We developed a

framework, SPACES, to study the fundamental elements required to build our dream organization. These organizational elements are Salary, Purpose, Autonomy, Competence, Environment, and Strategy. These components work in a harmonious and complementary way to produce a driven and powerful business organization.

A great party starts by bringing in the right people. Some people like to dance, some to talk, and some to pray. How can we make sure that whoever comes to our party is the right match for us? In the fourth part, we will show how building a strong environment starts by bringing the right people into the organization. We will also discuss the role of management in this part. Management must promote certain behaviors and activities, but avoid becoming overbearing and controlling, which damages individual worker initiative. We will review how to do this while contrasting the best and most powerful leadership styles.

At the end, in the fifth part, there are examples of organizations that are applying components of the framework. We'll see how they are developing their own formula to use some of these concepts and the results they get. You may reference these organizations as you wander through the pages of this book.

I was asked once what my purpose for writing *The Driven Organization* was. I answered, "It's simple; to help everyone realize that work is one of the best vehicles to make people extraordinary."

"Are you bored with life? Then throw yourself into some work you believe in with all you heart, live for it, die for it, and you will find happiness that you had thought could never be yours." Dale Carnegie, author of *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.

