The Invisible Leader: Transform Your Life, Work, and Organization with the Power of Authentic Purpose

Individual Workbook

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Hey, what’s in here?

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Why Purpose?

The human search for meaning and purpose in life and work is not a new concept. The search for purpose has transcended human civilizations since the beginning of time and seems to be foundational to what it means to be human. In fact, many researchers would say it is the defining characteristic of human beings.

Viktor Frankl, simultaneously a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp and a psychiatrist, theorized that “striving to find meaning in one’s life is the primary motivational force of man” (Frankl, 1985, p. 99). Frankl, through reported observations of the longevity and resilience of fellow concentration camp prisoners invoked Nietzsche and posited that “he who has a ‘why’ to live can bear almost any ‘how’” (p. 76). Frankl found that those prisoners who had a purpose in life that lied outside of the camp itself were more likely to survive.

The lesson: Purpose inspires a certain endless and powerful striving that traditional motivation tactics simply don’t sustain.

The same is true with modern people and organizations. When we have a reason for existing that is more important than ourselves, research finds we live longer and are more successful.

What is Authentic Purpose?

To simplify the definition of purpose (which has become confusing over the last few years), one of the best places to start is the dictionary. Purpose is defined as the “reason for which something is done or created; the reason for its existence.” Authentic is defined as “not false or copied; genuine and real.”

No person or organization would have a reason for existence at all if it wasn’t for other people, so I define authentic purpose as:

“...the genuine and original reason for existence of a person or organization that is useful to others and society.”

If your purpose is authentic, then it becomes your ultimate differentiator. Anyone can copy what you do but no one will ever be able to copy why you are.

But often we fall victim to confusing a purpose with results, which is why it’s just as important to reflect on what purpose is not.

“Anyone can copy what you do, but no one will ever be able to copy WHY you are.
What Purpose Is Not

Purpose is not a result, a statement, or an activity. Purpose is a compelling and deeply believed reason for existence. A reason we must justify daily. You can’t “do” a reason. You believe it with your heart, soul, and mind.

Believing in a “Why?” is difficult in our modern society.

We’ve structured our lives and organizations to be what-obsessed and results-focused. This is directly in conflict with our wiring as people. We are wired to be emotionally compelled, not simply pushed by the drive for money, status, and things. In fact, research shows that our limbic brain, where emotion is processed, is where most decision-making activity takes place.

And our lives are ultimately a series of decisions.

One of the biggest barriers I have seen to people embracing living, leading, and working with authentic purpose is the enduring grasp to outdated and misleading thinking about what motivates us.

In our personal and work lives, we say things like “If I only get this…” or “This will look good on a resume...” Or organization leaders tell me, “but they just want to be paid more…” or “they don’t really care about all of this personal development stuff…” or “they’re just trying to put food on the table...”

While meeting basic needs is important, all human beings’ brains make meaning of their world and experiences. And research has demonstrated since the 1950s that we have a desire for more than “things.”

For example, in 1955 sociologists Nancy Morse and Robert Weiss embarked on a landmark study to determine why people work. They found that a critical error had been made in people’s thinking about work: That people work for financial security. Morse and Weiss pioneered the “lottery question” that asked: “If you won the lottery, would you continue to work?” Through interviews with a random sample of over 401 employees, they found that for most people work served as much more than a function of making a living. Morse and Weiss stated, “In fact, even if they had enough money to support themselves, they would still want to work. Working gives them a feeling of being tied into the larger society, of having something to do, of having a purpose in life.”

Viktor Frankl referenced a similar Johns Hopkins University study in which 7,948 students at 48 colleges were asked what they considered “very important to them.” Just 16% of respondents indicated that “making a lot of money” was important whereas 78% of respondents said that “finding purpose and meaning” was most important.

Modern studies have demonstrated similar findings. Author and Sociologist Reginald Bibby found by surveying 10,000 younger workers on what was critical in a good job that more respondents felt that “interesting work,” a “sense of accomplishment,” and “adding something to peoples’ lives” were more important than “pay” and “job security.” And in my own research, when I reviewed all the empirical research studies done on why people commit to an organization or a movement, I found that the weakest form of commitment was transactional commitment (meaning benefits and pay) whereas the highest levels of commitment came from emotional commitment. One of the key ways to generate emotional commitment? Identifying and awakening purpose.
The Purpose Effect

People with a strong, pervasive sense of purpose in life and at work…

- Live up to 7 years longer (NIH, 1998; Carelton, 2014)
- Are twice as likely to learn something new each day (Gallup, 2013)
- Are 42% more likely to regularly experience contentment (Leider, 2009)
- Are less likely to be clinically depressed (Journal of Clinical Psychology, 1980)
- Are less likely to suffer from anxiety and depression in teenage and college years (PNAS, 2014)
- Have a 20% longer tenure where they work (NYU/Imperative, 2015)
- Are 50% more likely to be leaders, be promoted (NYU/Imperative, 2015)
- Are 64% more fulfilled at work (NYU/Imperative, 2015)

Purpose…

- Quadruples the likelihood of being engaged at work and in school (Gallup, 2013)
- Is ranked the #1 factor in job satisfaction, and is more than 2x more important than the next factor, organizational leadership (Happiness Research Institute, 2015)

And…

- In the private sector, purpose-driven companies outperform the market by 15:1—and outperform comparison companies by 6:1 (Collins, Porras, 2001)

3 Beliefs of Purposeful People

1. The belief that you and what you do matters.
2. The belief in a clear purpose.
3. The belief in proving that purpose.
Practicing Purpose: Tips to Learn (and Teach) a Purposeful Mindset

Make imagination a habit.

Focus on the greater good of every task, the people - especially the mundane or routine.

Be a storyteller and a storycollector: Change the narrative.

State your purpose, keep it visible, and detach it from results and outcomes.

Tell the story of the problem you solve, not only the solutions you offer.

Reflect on what actions and attitudes don’t align with your purpose.

Identify barriers and spend resources mitigating them.

Redesign/reimagine your environment to support purpose.
The Path to Purpose

The diagram depicted below represents a path to living, leading, and working more purposefully. The design of the path is intentional.

Our “delivered” purpose is what the world sees. Often this is where purpose work starts and ends. But to deliver a purpose consistently research finds we must actively discover and re-discover it, clarify it, and align it.

Each section of this workbook assumes you have read “The Invisible Leader” and will frequently reference the book.
PRIMER EXERCISE

This exercise is a “re-introduction” of yourself to yourself. It helps to get into the mindset of believing that, wherever you find yourself right now, you have purpose and worthwhile beliefs about the world. Using my definition of purpose, you can’t “find” your purpose because you never lost it. You must discover it within.

1. WHY YOU, HERE, NOW?

Of all the infinite possible paths your life could have taken: You are here reading these words.

Why?

Tell us a story about why you are here by following the below structure:

1. In 200 words or less…. Choose the significant moment in your life that nudged you down the path that led here, today reading these words. This should be one moment – a moment so powerful, that if it never happened, you are confident that would not be here. Describe it clearly. What? When? Who? How?

2. Now, write in one sentence a belief you have about the world. “Because of this moment, I believe that […..]”

3. End it with: “This is why I am here today.”
2. THE 7-DAY PURPOSE JOURNAL

This exercise is designed for you to gather and analyze key data about yourself and your own purpose by focusing on three overlapping areas: **Passion, Talent, and Contribution**.

At the end of each day, take five minutes of quiet, uninterrupted time and respond **ONLY** to the prompt listed and read and meditate on the quote provided. It is important that you stay on the prompt. For example, if the prompt encourages you to “write down what you loved doing” don’t write down reflections such as “I didn’t love doing anything today, here’s why…”

This “thought awareness” is key to beginning to cultivate a purposeful mindset.

**DAYS 1-3: Passion**

**Day 1**

Date:


“One purpose is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” — Frederick Buechner

**Write down what you loved doing today.**
“Purpose is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.” – Frederick Buechner

Write down what you loved doing today.
― Frederick Buechner

Write down what you loved doing today.
“The meaning of life is to find your gift, the purpose of life is to give it away.” – Pablo Picasso

Write down what you were good at today.
Day 5    Date:    

“The meaning of life is to find your gift, the purpose of life is to give it away.” – Pablo Picasso

Write down what you were good at today.
“Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.” - Muhammad Ali

Write down what you noticed today about the world or your community that should be better. What problems did you notice?
Day 7

Date:

“Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth. -
Muhammad Ali

Write down what you noticed today about the world or your community that should be better. What problems did you see?
Analyzing Your Data

Congratulations! Doing something every day for seven days is hard, but this reflection helps to build the muscle of a purposeful mindset.

Now that you have some “data,” go back and carefully read your entries starting with the Passion category.

When you find something that repeats itself in any of the entries for a category, make up a name for it (or a code) like “connecting” or “helping others” and then highlight EVERY TIME that code appears in what you wrote in your entries in that category.

Write down all the codes you created below after reading each of your journal sections.

Codes for Passion
(i.e. helping friends, brainstorming)

Codes for Talent
(i.e. giving advice, analyzing numbers)

Codes for Contribution
(i.e. the environment, homelessness)
My Key Purpose Themes

Now, look at your codes and group them together into themes. Come up with 1 or 2 major themes per section. These are your Key Purpose Themes.

I love to…

1. 
2. 

I am good at…

1. 
2. 

And I want to help…

1. 
2. 

The intersection of these three themes is where your authentic purpose lies and answers the questions: Of what use are you to the world? And how can I use when I am good at for the world?

Now, don’t stress if you don’t have clear themes. Repeat this practice as often as it takes to gain clarity – especially in times of confusion.
2. IMAGINING IMPACT

This exercise is designed to start cultivating the belief that you and what you do matters. When we start seeing ourselves as a key part of a system (the world) we start realizing that purpose is all around us.

Imagining the inevitable impact of even the small, mundane parts of your life and work is a key practice to developing a purposeful mindset.

1. Pick an Act or Task

Think back on your day (yes, today) and choose one self-contained, seemingly insignificant act that you performed (Hint: pick something you think is routine and boring). This could be saying “hi” to another person, smiling at someone, or having a conversation in line for coffee. The key is that you choose one act that happened only once. Try to avoid general actions that span a longer timeframe like, “I went to work.” Be very specific.

Now, write down what you did or said.

2. Imagine

Albert Einstein once said, “Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.” This is where the fun starts. Start to imagine and follow the “ripple” of the act that you wrote down. Who did and could the act impact? How? Did it change someone’s emotions? Did it change someone’s mindset? Someone’s perception? Did it change the simple direction they were walking or what flavor latte they ordered?

Now, start thinking about one step removed from your act. What changed as a result of the initial change the act caused? Now keep imagining, step-by-step, how each act builds on the former, describing what and who changed after each successive act.

Keep going until you reach a point of global impact.

Now, if you’re like me, you will inevitably get to the point of saying to yourself “no way this would ever happen” or “this is so cheesy.” This is the precise barrier you need to break through. Our doubt can consume us and bring us down into a nice, comfortable place called complacency.

3. Map It

As you trace your act, literally draw it out. Draw one arrow or path leading from one effect to the next and write out a short description of each effect as you go. Try to imagine at least 10 steps removed from the original act until you reach a global level of impact. The first time you do this, it will be very hard. But do it daily, weekly, or monthly and it can change your thinking.
Reflecting on the previous work, re-read Chapter 6 and complete this template. Keep it visible every day.

3. PURPOSE STATEMENT TEMPLATE

I EXIST TO ________________________________

VERB

_____________________________ TO 

WHO?

_____________________________ THINK/FEEL/DO 

EXAMPLE: "I exist to inspire people and organizations to awaken and deliver their purpose."
Inevitably there are barriers to living and working purposefully. Time, money, or the nature of our work or life situations can all be justified in our “what-obsessed” minds to be barriers. Yet one of the most powerful ways to change in any aspect of life or work is to mitigate the barriers to allow for the catalysts to take over.

Take a moment in the below to brainstorm your catalysts and barriers to living and working purposefully. Spending your time and resources on reducing your barriers becomes your personal development plan.
5. SETTING A PURPOSEFUL VISION

Take a moment to contemplate and visualize your ideal vision for your life/work this coming year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pillar 1: Feeling Qualities</th>
<th>Pillar 2: Being Qualities</th>
<th>Pillar 3: Activation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does it <em>feel</em> to be living this purpose?</td>
<td>If I were living this purpose, who would I <em>be</em>? What qualities of being will I have? (i.e. courageous, spontaneous, giving)</td>
<td>What are the activities, people, places, and sensory objects that will make you <em>feel</em> what you wrote?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What specific actions can you take right now to start embodying the qualities of *being* that you wrote down?
REFERENCES/READING LIST

Foundational Books on Purpose

Key Research Reports

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