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## Your managerial skills can either reinforce or undermine your business success...

The unsung hero of business life is the humble manager.

But being a great manager can be really **difficult**.

And what every business leader understands, as the saying goes, is that:

*"People don't quit bad businesses, they quit bad managers."*

If a team or a business is to succeed, great managers are **critically important**.

Your managerial skills can propel your business toward success.

Your managerial skills can enhance the lives of your team and everyone working within your business.

Your managerial skills can enhance the relationships you have with your customers.

Or ... they can undermine your business success!

### Inner work conversations are game changers...

Ask yourself – who do I talk with the most, in a typical working day?

We generally talk to ourselves more than to anyone else! This is normal human behaviour. Everyone in your business is talking to themselves too. We all live our lives in our minds.

Powerful research shows that these inner work conversations about our



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**perceptions, feelings and motivations** ultimately determine the success of your people and the success of your business.

### Your 70% impact lever...

If we're talking extremes, your people are either **enthusiastically engaged** in their work or living work lives of **quiet, unhappy desperation**.

Effective managerial skills are the biggest lever for improving your team's engagement.

For many years, country by country, workplace by workplace, the research company Gallup have conducted one of the world's largest studies into team engagement.

Millions of data points and supporting research point to 2 key insights:

1. Improve team engagement and you'll experience better business results
2. 70% of team engagement improvements are determined by managers

Managers in possession of effective skills and work habits are crucial to your business success.

### IN A NUTSHELL:

The knowledge, skills and habits of your managers directly influence the inner work conversation of every team member every day. When managers positively influence these **inner work conversations**, every day, your business will achieve better results.

## 4 outcomes – 1 key skill...

Your business achieves a breakthrough when your managers build the knowledge and skill to positively influence your team's inner work conversations.

**“Inner work life is the confluence of perceptions, emotions, and motivations that individuals experience as they react to and make sense of the events of their workday.”**

– Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer, *The Progress Principle*

Amabile and Kramer's research suggests that this is not simply about an inner work conversation – it's about your team's inner work **life!**

Because they were able to access nearly **12,000 daily diary entries** from people working in both successful and failing businesses, they were able to identify key patterns that determine whether people are:

1. More or less **PRODUCTIVE**
2. More or less **CREATIVE**
3. More or less **COMMITTED**
4. More or less **COLLABORATIVE**

All four outcomes are directly influenced by a single manager insight and skill.

## Your one key skill...

The research clearly suggests that:

**“When you don't manage for progress, no amount of emotional intelligence or incentive planning will save the day.**

**“Our research inside companies revealed that the best way to motivate people, day in and day out, is by facilitating progress.”**

– Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer, *The Progress Principle*

For example, millions of people, especially young men between the ages of 15 and 35, become immersed in computer fantasy worlds such as the World of Warcraft.

What keeps them hooked?

To a large extent, it's two things: **constant progress indicators** and **achievement markers**. Both of these insights leverage **the progress principle**.

### KEY FACT:

It's difficult to get a sense of progress unless you're aware that you have actually made progress in your work, every day – ensuring this is the skill of a great manager (and of great computer games).

When progress is visible to people every day, you tap into their intrinsic motivation for doing good work. And many studies prove that intrinsic motivation beats any form of carrot and stick (extrinsic) motivation, hands down.

## Manage meaningful work...

**“...of all the positive events that influence inner work life, the single most powerful is progress in meaningful work.”**

– Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer, *The Progress Principle*

As an example, if you are employed by an innovative household goods manufacturer, making a game-changing mop will feel like meaningful work.

Making design progress in a small way, every day, can feel rewarding, engaging and motivating. But if a leadership directive then demands that this innovative new mop be dropped in favour of refreshing older existing products, the meaning drops out of your work world. You can imagine the harmful inner work conversations this team of people would be having in their minds, as well as the effect of their level of engagement in their new roles.

## On a grander scale....

When Steve Jobs, in need of a new CEO, was trying to woo John Sculley away from his wildly successful career at PepsiCo, he famously asked him: *“Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling sugared water or do you want a chance to change the world?”*

Mops, fizzy water, computers or your product/service matters not – **building a meaningful connection around the work your people do really does matter**. Great managers look for and build meaningful connections between people and their work.

As the researchers suggest: *“...making **progress in meaningful work** is the most powerful stimulant to great inner work life.”*

### KEY FACT:

The research also shows that it does not matter whether a manager is working in a thriving or a failing business. Managers who recognise **progress in meaningful**

**work, every day**, see their people become more productive, creative, committed and collaborative.

## Daily responsibility?!

As you go about your work, you and your people have inner work conversations – every day.

The research insights from the 12,000 diary entries points to good managers **influencing** these inner work conversations – every day.

Very few managers recognise the vital importance of every team member seeing and feeling that they have made meaningful work progress each and every day. The great managers make the most of this insight.

- Great managers **positively influence** inner work conversations every day and positively influence their team's results.
- Weak managers **negatively influence** inner work conversations and business results every day because they don't ensure daily progress is made and recognised.

## A PROVEN SOLUTION FOR YOU...

Help your people see progress – every day. Help them see how their work is meaningful – every day. By doing this, you'll positively influence their inner work life and achieve stronger business results – together.

## Do what, exactly?

As the researchers suggest: *“It is as simple, and as difficult, as creating the conditions for people to succeed at important work.”*

In short order:

- **Agree clear goals** to ensure that your people understand the purpose and importance of their work. Establish connections between daily tasks and your **broader organisational objectives** so that your team see how their contributions matter. Doing this will build meaning for your team.
- **Remove obstacles** that could slow down progress or that could create frustration. Help your team access the tools, time and

support they need to do their jobs effectively.

- **Celebrate small wins every day** by recognising daily achievements and small improvements that push the project forward – don't concentrate solely on the big milestones.

**STOP** – thinking that individual performance depends only on something inherent in each team member's character.

**START** – helping your team, every day, to make and see progress in work they care about. When you do, you positively influence your team's inner work conversations and build business results.

## BEWARE: Losses beat wins....

As powerful as daily progress is for improving inner work conversations and the performance of your people, the research shows that the negative impact of setbacks is more than two times stronger than the impact of progress!

Setbacks can cause uncertainty, doubt or confusion and can quickly lower motivation for the work. Great managers focus first on eliminating the obstacles that cause setbacks. Involving your team in resolving and

Rather than pointing the finger of blame or making excuses when setbacks happen, great managers recognise the 3 fingers pointing back at them and engage with their team in 3 types of conversation.

## 3 manager conversations

1. Progress or Setbacks
2. Catalysts or Constraints
3. Nourishment or Toxins

Great managers take responsibility for these 3 conversations in their daily managerial routine.

They make these conversations deliberate, systematic and disciplined by using **the progress principle checklist** every day, in the same way that a commercial pilot uses a pre-flight checklist every flight to ensure the safety of the plane and all the passengers.

Go to the downloadable resources for an example checklist as suggested by the research.

This Business Breakthrough report is focused on progress conversations because they have the biggest impact. Check out the book, *The Progress Principle*, for more stories and details on Catalysts and Nourishment or go to the downloadable tools for a quick-fire list of examples.

Now that you know how vital seeing and feeling progress on meaningful work is to your people, are you ready to **become a manager of daily progress?**

## TIME TO DISAGREE:

“But people don't show you how they feel or what they're thinking.”

You're right, people prefer to keep their inner work conversations to themselves.

It can therefore be very difficult to predict what they are thinking and feeling!

Rather than concerning yourself with the inner dialogues of your team, the research suggests you concentrate on doing what great managers do and **focus on the daily progress of meaningful work.**

“Helping everyone see progress EVERY DAY seems too intense for us.”

Most managers respond the same way about the intensity of daily progress. However, seeking out small wins can be relatively easy.

You know that your people are having inner work conversations multiple times throughout every working day. If you avoid **progress conversations** or fail to establish **constant progress indicators** and **achievement markers** as the computer games makers do, you'll likely see a dip in engagement. What can you and your team create to make daily progress tangible, visible, measurable? Answer this question and you'll be managing daily progress and building team engagement.

## ULTIMATE ARGUMENT:

“How do I know this will work for me and my business?”

Until you test **the progress principle checklist** every day for a few weeks, you won't know (you'll find the checklist in the download tools). The research suggests that the progress principle is applicable whether you're working in a thriving business or in one that is failing – demonstrating that the daily progress skills of the manager are profoundly important.



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preventing future setbacks (without blame) helps you repair inner work conversations and helps your people move back to daily progress.

**GET YOUR BITESIZE SUPPORT TOOLS NOW**

<https://businessbreakthrough.online/build-great-manager-skills-tools-and-resources>



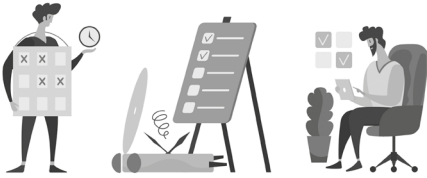
## Tell me more...

*The Progress Principle: Using Small Wins to Ignite Joy, Engagement, and Creativity at Work*, by Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer, explores how making progress in meaningful work drives motivation, engagement and overall job satisfaction. Based on extensive research, the book highlights that small, everyday accomplishments have a profound impact on an individual's emotions and performance. Through real-world examples and

data from hundreds of workplace diaries, the authors describe how managers can develop a positive work environment by recognising progress, removing obstacles and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.



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## 4 helping hands for you...

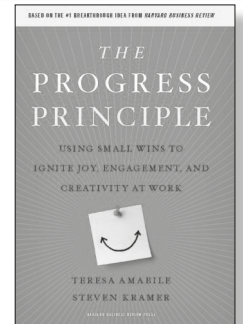


Whatever project you're on or whatever work you're doing, you intuitively know that when you feel you're making daily progress, you feel like you've had a good day.

Why not put these 4 things to work so you can improve the sense of daily progress with all of your people? Rather than practicing amateur psychology to try to manage the internal work conversations of your team, simply focus on making daily progress:

1. Reinforce and better communicate the value of the work your people do (and make work meaningful).
2. Be attentive when setbacks happen and work together on resolving and preventing them. Always recognise and celebrate small (progress) wins.
3. Make daily progress visible, tangible or measurable for everyone in your team (as the computer game designers do).
4. Use the **progress principle checklist** every day so that you 'fly safe' every day at work – just like the pilots who use their pre-flight checklist every time they fly.

A key takeaway from *The Progress Principle* is the importance of the "inner work life," which refers to the combination of emotions, motivations and perceptions that influence employees performance. The book emphasises that managers play a vital role in either boosting or hindering progress through their actions and feedback. By focusing on small wins and creating conditions that support meaningful work, businesses can enhance creativity, productivity and employee wellbeing. With its practical insights and research-backed strategies, *The Progress Principle* serves as a valuable guide for leaders looking to inspire and sustain high levels of motivation in their teams.



## GET YOUR BITESIZE SUPPORT TOOLS NOW

<https://businessbreakthrough.online/build-great-manager-skills-tools-and-resources>

Please use these tools and resources to build your manager skills, enabling your team to see the progress they are making, find meaning in their work and positively influence their inner work conversations.

FOR MORE EDITIONS OF BUSINESS BREAKTHROUGHS, PLEASE GO TO:  
<https://businessbreakthrough.online/library>

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