

NANO TOOLS FOR LEADERS®

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Nano Tools for Leaders® are fast, effective leadership tools that you can learn and start using in less than 15 minutes — with the potential to significantly impact your success as a leader and the engagement and productivity of the people you lead.

Contributor: Adam Grant, PhD, management professor, The Wharton School. Grant has been recognized as Wharton's top-rated professor, and is the author of the best-selling *Give and Take: A Revolutionary Approach to Success*.

THE GOAL:

Increase motivation and productivity by showing your employees the positive difference their work makes on the lives of others.

NANO TOOL:

Show your team the positive effects their work creates in other people's lives. Research by Professor Adam Grant shows that one five-minute interaction with those who benefit from the organization's products and services can produce up to a 500 percent increase in employee productivity. When clients, customers, and other end users express feedback and appreciation, employees develop stronger beliefs in the impact and value of their work.

Interaction also increases empathy for customers, even when the interaction is virtual. Research with radiologists who have no patient interaction has shown that attaching a photo of the patient to an X-ray enhances their effort and accuracy, yielding 12 percent increases in the length of their reports and 46% improvements in diagnostic findings.

HOW COMPANIES USE IT:

- Volvo collects stories from drivers and passengers about how the company's safety designs have saved their lives.
- Wells Fargo managers show videotapes of customers describing how bankers' loans have made it possible for them to purchase homes and pay for college.
- Medtronic invites patients who have benefited from the company's medical devices to tell their life-changing stories at an annual holiday party. Engineers and technicians also attend approximately 70 percent of all operations where Medtronic devices are inserted.
- A large global accounting firm regularly gives their back-office accountants a chance to attend client presentations and meet with customers to hear direct feedback.

ACTION STEPS:

1. Identify groups of people who benefit from your team's work, but have never shared their feedback, such as clients, customers, suppliers, or coworkers and managers from different divisions and departments.



2. Arrange short interactions with your team: invite the beneficiaries to speak to employees; or share their stories in emails or on the intranet; or create short video or electronic messages where people express their appreciation to your team.
3. Find new stories to share on a regular basis to keep engagement alive.
4. Ask team members to share their own stories about how their work has made a difference.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- “The Problem with Financial Incentives — and What to Do About It,” Adam Grant and Jitendra Singh, *Knowledge@Wharton* (Mar. 30, 2011). Argues that employers should rely on intrinsic motivators by providing opportunities for their employees to make choices, develop skills, do work that matters, and build meaningful interpersonal connections.
- “The Significance of Task Significance: Job Performance Effects, Relational Mechanisms, and Boundary Conditions,” Adam Grant, *Journal of Applied Psychology* (2008, Vol. 93, No. 1, 108-124). Describes research that indicates a causal link between job performance and task significance.
- *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us*, Daniel Pink (Riverhead Books, 2011). Reveals that performance is not dependent on salary or other benefits but rather on the ability to direct our own lives, to learn and create new things, and to do better by ourselves and our world.

ABOUT NANO TOOLS:

Nano Tools for Leaders® was conceived and developed by Deb Giffen, MCC, Director of Innovative Learning Solutions at Wharton Executive Education. It is jointly sponsored by Wharton Executive Education and Wharton’s Center for Leadership and Change Management, Wharton Professor of Management Michael Useem, Director. Nano Tools Academic Director is Professor John Paul MacDuffie, Professor of Management at the Wharton School and Director of the Program on Vehicle and Mobility Innovation (PVMi) at Wharton’s Mack Institute for Innovation Management.