

# Why is delivering against purpose so hard to do?

## What lessons can we learn from successful leaders who've done it?

T-minus  
Events



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# We tackled some big questions...

Although lots of start ups come to the world with laudable ambitions and noble intent, and corporate business leaders, marketing departments and sustainability officers talk loudly about being 'purpose-led' businesses, many companies are still stuck in business as usual.

Studies show that purposeful companies grow 3x faster, their share price outperforms the market 12x and their people are not only less likely to leave, but are happier and more satisfied in their work too. But if the benefits are so clear, **why are many companies still struggling to achieve this? And what can their leaders do differently?**

We invited a couple of our friends and partners at T-minus to explore this and some big questions:

- ? The difference between 'having a purpose' and creating an organisation where people feel 'purposeful'
- ? The ways you can build a purposeful organisation at scale
- ? The difference between mission and purpose and whether it matters
- ? Why purpose is so important for people and organisations (and what's driving this growing need for people to find it at work)
- ? Practical examples of what you can do on the front line to build a sense of purpose to motivate individuals



# Grounded in the context and challenges organisations are currently facing

A huge thanks to the leaders that joined us from both global corporations and from high growth scale ups including the likes of Astrazeneca, Tesla, Volvo, Sainsburys, White & Case, BCB Group, Prodigy Finance and Paladone... who shared the challenges and realities that they were facing.



How you keep the purpose going in a period of rapid growth and geographic expansion and avoid cultural dilution.



How do you maintain purpose in incredibly difficult economic times both for organisations and individuals, where it's not as easy to do shift work and live a comfortable life anymore.



The reality of the psychological impact of a prolonged recession.



Overcoming the 'we sell cars' mentality amongst senior leadership, even though we know purpose leads to more profitable business.



Reaching a scale where the mission and the organisation are both so big, that individuals struggle to connect with the impact they can have.

It led to an incredibly thought provoking discussion!

# What's the difference between 'having a purpose' and creating an organisation where people feel 'purposeful'?



**Duncan Wardley** – Founder, Emote Consulting, author, and speaker with over 25 years experience working with organisations on cultural and emotional transformation, applying principles of behavioural psychology to unleash the potential of great leaders.



## There is a huge difference!

What purpose-led businesses are doing is helping their people to feel purposeful. It's less about the purpose statement.

The disaster scenario is when an organisation or a few executives at the top proclaims a purpose to the organisation. Purpose is a felt emotion. You can't just hand it out like playing cards or put posters on the wall and expect people to feel it.

So the question becomes, **how do you make people feel purposeful?**

Adam Grant led a research study with call centre workers working in fundraising for university scholarships. They ran a randomised control trial with two groups:

**Group 1:** The '**best practice**' condition where colleagues were given a script with psychological tricks for holding conversations and raising money

**Group 2:** The '**purpose**' condition, where the researchers brought in a beneficiary of the scholarships previously to tell their story and the impact the scholarship had on their life to the sales team.

### The results:

**Group 1:** There was no difference in sales or money raised to the baseline condition

**Group 2:** This group spent 100% more time spent on the phone, and raised 400% more money, sustained over a period of 6 months.



# How do you build a purposeful organisation at scale?



**Gillian Drakeford** – Board advisor, mentor and ex-CEO IKEA UK, with 25 years International Retail experience developing leaders, connecting people to purpose and driving business growth.

**“ It starts with leadership, but it has to reach all the way to the front line.**

**“ It takes time, energy and conversation. But the output is far greater than the investment because you end up with a workforce that is prepared to do more.**

You have to get people to truly believe in the impact of their products on other people and see that they are contributing to something bigger, and also allow space and create an environment for everyone to connect to it in their own way.

We often don't treat all employees in the same way. As you go down the hierarchy there tends to be lots of conversations at the top but not many at the bottom – but you need to reach the person collecting trolleys on a Saturday afternoon.

At IKEA, we did this through breaking down and identifying the jobs that our products solved for customers – things like “you can find your clothes in the morning” and “you know where your keys are” and did all sorts of practical activities like giving front line workers products to take home and then using the solutions they had for using the products in stores and online.

# What is the difference between a mission and a purpose?

From an academic point of view, a mission is something you can achieve, whereas a purpose transcends that and is, in theory at least, an 'infinite goal'.

To spend time worrying about the distinctions can be a waste of time that would be better invested thinking about what you do at the front line to help people connect to the mission or the purpose.

“ It doesn't matter  
that much! ”

“ What you're looking to unlock is discretionary effort. ”

Allowing front line workers more **autonomy**, to have the permission to do things outside the rule set, to self-express and to create their own ways of doing things helps people connect to the mission or purpose. These are things managers often try to suppress.



# Practical tips of what you can do on the front line to build a sense of purpose and unlock discretionary effort

- ✓ **Encourage curiosity and freedom to experiment** on the front line rather than managing by KPIs.
- ✓ **Focus conversations at the team level**, ensuring everyone trusts one another, is solution focused, stretched and sees the big picture and how their efforts link to it.
- ✓ **Manage the say-do gap**. For instance by creating a 'shadow board' from all levels of the organisation to hold the executives to account for behaviours and decision making.
- ✓ **Have a zero tolerance for things that get in the way of people feeling purposeful**, like incivility or not treating others with respect.
- ✓ **Start with senior leader buy-in**. Often the issue is the senior leadership don't truly understand the importance and undermine purpose with the wrong behaviours, which can be fatal.
- ✓ **Overinvest in induction programmes**. Get people to think about their strengths and motivations, and how the organisation can help them be at their best (in one randomised control trial, this increased customer satisfaction by 11% and reduced attrition by a third).

# Some inspirational examples and case studies of leading organisations

## The University Hospital Michigan

For instance Candice Billops, a cleaner there who became famous (add link), wouldn't just clean the beds but also moves the pictures around the walls, believing little things were helping the patients recover. **Allowing people to create a narrative around their own actions** helps people connect to their sense of purpose.

## Dairy Crest

By reframing the purpose away from the produce (delivering milk) to the customer job to be done (destressing people's morning's), and flipping the command and control 'management by ruler' approach to instead ask front line staff "What have you done this week to destress our customers mornings?" and "What ideas have you got to do this?" a huge wave of energy was unleashed. Milkmen who hadn't spoken with their depot message came in with pages and pages of handwritten notes from delivering amazon parcels to doing customers dry cleaning for them.

## Disney

The most productive cleaners that worked the best and stayed longest in the organisation **would break the rules**, for instance by putting a cuddly toy on the child's bed (even though they were told never to touch customers belongings).

## SAS

Allow coders to spend a week or more sitting with a client every year to understand the impact their product had on customers, which from an efficiency point of view looks like madness but the return on investment was enormous because they get the connection to purpose, as well as learning more about their customers challenges and how to fix their issues.



# Why is purpose so important for people and organisations?

The data is in now on purpose, and we know it can have a transformatory effect on people's lives and on organisations.

Feeling purposeful is one of the biggest predictors of **happiness and fulfilment** in the workplace. Having a strong sense of purpose also **makes you live longer**, and is better for your life expectancy than smoking. ([source](#))

It's critical for organisations too, even those that might not altruistically care about their employees, as **fulfilled employees are more likely to develop as leaders**, earn higher scores on performance evaluations, and tend to be **better teammates**. [1]

We also know, based on substantial research, that happier employees are **healthier**, have **lower rates of absenteeism**, are **highly motivated** to succeed, are **more creative**, have **better relationships with peers**, and are **less likely to leave a company**. [2]

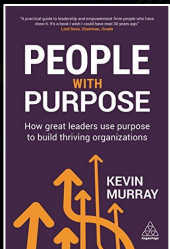
Through making people feel purposeful, organisations unlock discretionary effort in their workforce, which creates the extraordinary business outcomes we often hear about, such as how **purposeful companies outperformed the S&P 500 by 14 times** and Good to Great Companies by 6 times over a period of 15 years ([source](#)).

## **\*\*References\*\***

- [1] E. Diener and W. Tov, "National Accounts of Well-Being," in "Handbook of Social Indicators and Quality of Life Research," eds. K.C. Land, A.C. Michalos, and M.J. Sirgy (London: Springer, 2012): 137-157
- [2] E.R. Tenney, J.M. Poole, and E. Diener, "Does Positivity Enhance Work Performance? Why, When, and What We Don't Know," Research in Organizational Behavior 36 (2016): 27-46.

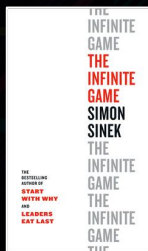
# Resources / Further Reading

as recommended by T-minus, our speakers and the community



## People with Purpose

by Kevin Murray and is about how great leaders can make purpose the beating heart of their organization and use it to power performance.

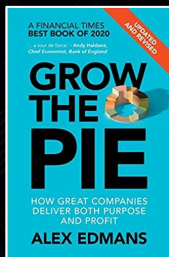


## The infinite game by

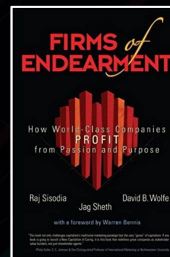
Simon Sinek explores the difference between finite and infinite objectives, and what it takes to unite a team and keep purpose in mind even when making tough decisions.



Engage for success are a growing, dynamic, voluntary movement promoting employee engagement as a better way to work that benefits individual employees, teams, and whole organisations.



Grow the pie by Alex Edmans. [book] [Launch Video]. Should companies be run for profit or purpose? In this ground-breaking book, acclaimed finance professor and TED speaker Alex Edmans shows it's not an either-or choice.



Firms of endearment by David B Wolfe is about gaining share of heart, not just share of wallet. It's about aligning stakeholders interests, not just juggling them. It's about building companies that leave the world a better place and why you must do all this, or risk being left in the dust.



# Thanks

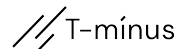
Thank you to our host, speakers and attendees for being so open and willing to share their experiences.



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# We are T-minus

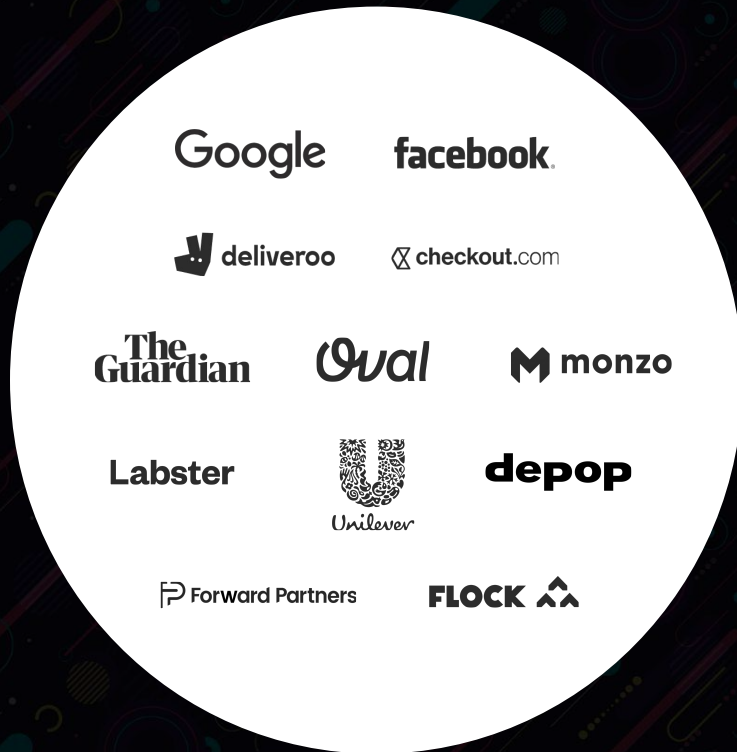
**We work with businesses who are striving to have a positive impact on the world.**

We help our clients solve problems whilst building capability, shifting culture and unlocking growth.

**Purpose is at the heart of it all. We ...**

- ... Build disruptive leadership capability
- ... Facilitate strategic problem solving
- ... Unlock individual and organisational purpose
- ... Upskill Design Thinking, Lean Start-up and Agile
- ... Accelerate change, transformation and growth
- ... Create high performing teams
- ... Bring the best practice from start-ups to organisations at scale

## We unleash the possible







# T-minus Events

## Learn more and get in touch

If you would like to explore any of the questions from the event or want to push the boundaries of innovation, leadership, learning, people and culture in your organisation, drop us a line at [info@wearetminus.com](mailto:info@wearetminus.com) and let's talk.

