

# IN FOCUS

HR PEOPLE + STRATEGY'S WHITE PAPER SERIES

## The Purpose-Driven Professional: Your Best Hire

### ABSTRACT

This paper defines and examines the profile of a purpose-driven professional—an employee who primarily prioritizes and is motivated by intrinsic value over extrinsic value in work each day. It establishes the origins of this work orientation, debunking the common misconceptions of purpose and ascertaining that purpose-driven professionals show higher degrees of work competencies, fulfillment, and performance. The paper explores the ways in which companies can most effectively hire and retain purpose-driven professionals.

Today we have countless ways to try to predict the success of a potential hire from grade point average (GPA) to personality type to experience level. And yet study after study shows that these measures fall short. A recent study by Google revealed that GPA doesn't matter in assessing work performance, and we now know that introverts can be as effective employees as extroverts.<sup>1</sup>

Breakthrough workplace research has illuminated that what predicts performance, leadership potential, and loyalty isn't something that appears on most LinkedIn profiles. Instead, success stems from our fundamental orientation toward work. People who define work as first and foremost being about fulfillment and purpose outperform their peers by nearly every measure.

### THE PURPOSE-DRIVEN PROFESSIONAL

More than 50 million people in the U.S. workforce today (or one-third of it) are purpose-driven. They are the future of our workforce and economy and they are the people you need to hire if you want to be an industry competitor.

Purpose-driven-professionals are the

highest performers in their fields, regardless of job title, and they are also the most active contributors to their communities.<sup>2</sup> They are the future of our workforce and our economy and as the Millennial Generation fills the working ranks, they are growing in numbers.

People who are driven by purpose in their work are more likely to experience higher overall well being, be high performers and bring out the best in those around them. They are even shown to live longer.<sup>3</sup>

In the next decade we will see a talent war to attract and retain this potent segment of the workforce as study after study points to their transformational power.

### ORIGINS OF PURPOSE IN WORK

A person's work orientation is typically established in adolescence, and is a combination of myriad influencers. We develop a narrative about the role of work in our lives based on the models we observe during these formative years.

### Three Types of People

**1. Money-Oriented:** Work is a financial transaction.

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You can't seek to change an employee's orientation to work.

Some people see work as “just a job.” It is a vehicle for material reward, but not fulfilling in and of itself. They are the TGIF crowd, enduring the work week in order to support interests outside their jobs.

**2. Status-Oriented:** Work is an identity.

Some people see work as a career. It is a means of social status, achievement and prestige. They work to fuel a positive sense of identity and are likely the first to sign up to attend high school reunions so they can report on their success to their peers.

**3. Purpose-Oriented:** Work is how we add value.

Some people see work itself as a calling. They see work as inherently having the ability to be meaningful and rich in purpose. For them, work is the manifestation of their passions and a force for good in the world.

**Orientations to Work Are Static**

Our orientation to work rarely changes over the course of our careers, even as we change jobs and experience ups and downs. If you enter the workforce with one orientation you are very likely to

leave it with the same one.

While this work orientation isn't hardwired, it is so core to our beliefs about work that changing orientation to work typically requires a major crisis that causes one reexamine their core beliefs. They must let go and grieve their old orientation and then build a new one. This is painful and is usually associated with experiencing a crisis (typically a painful loss) that shakes them to their core and makes them question their priorities in life and narrative about how the world works. This is often what is occurring in a mid-life crisis.

**PROFILE OF PURPOSE**

The purpose-driven professional sees work first and foremost as being about fulfillment and value creation, not financial reward or advancement. There is no such thing as a purpose-driven profession, just purpose-driven people. That is, purpose-driven professionals are not all teachers and social workers; they're accountants, lawyers, assistants, designers, salespeople, and janitors.<sup>5</sup>

Purpose-driven people make most of their friends at work and want their colleagues to feel like a second family. They see their work as a means to help other

**Myths About Purpose-Driven Professionals**

<b>Myth One:</b> Only Driven by Causes	Purpose-driven professionals define their work as helping others regardless of the job and don't need a cause to meet this need.
<b>Myth Two:</b> Not Ambitious or Driven	Purpose-driven people are more likely to be your high and outstanding performers.
<b>Myth Three:</b> Not Business-Minded	Purpose-driven professionals report higher business and organizational acumen than their peers.
<b>Myth Four:</b> Just Social Workers	Purpose-driven professionals work in every profession and industry.
<b>Myth Five:</b> Minority in the Workforce	Purpose-driven professionals are now the largest segment of the U.S. workforce.
<b>Myth Five:</b> Purpose is only experienced in nonsecular ways	Purpose is not only experienced in faith-based environments but is present in secular experiences as well.

	Purpose Needs		
	Relationships connection to co-workers and community	Impact being part of something greater than oneself	Growth ability to learn and grow
<b>Women</b> 47% of workforce today <sup>6</sup>	Women employees value relationships at work three times more than their male counterparts <sup>7</sup>	Women are more likely than men to make impact a high priority in their career <sup>8</sup>	Practicing self-development is among the top three differentiators of women leaders relative to men <sup>9</sup>
<b>Millennials</b> 36% of the workforce today	71% want their co-workers to be their second family <sup>10</sup>	72% consider a job with impact to be very important <sup>3</sup>	65% define personal development as the most important job selection criteria <sup>11</sup>

people and make an impact. They take their work home with them because they desire to integrate, not balance, their work and life. They enjoy talking about work with others. They are hungry for continuous learning and challenge. If they were financially secure, they would continue to work even if they weren't paid. They don't look forward to retirement but instead see some form of work being part of their lives until the very end.

Women and Millennials represent the largest segments of the purpose-driven workforce. Millennials seek meaning at work more than any other generation and women express a greater need for it than their male colleagues. Together, these two groups are tipping our workforce's orientation away from advancement and financial gain and towards fulfillment.

## PURPOSE AND PERFORMANCE

Purpose-driven professionals represent a significant majority of outstanding performers in most organizations. Their success isn't surprising when you see what they bring to the table compared to their peers.

### 1) Leadership Competencies

Compared to money- and status-oriented professionals, purpose-driven

professionals report statistically significant higher competencies in self-development, learning on the fly, career ambition, boss relationships, comfort around management, business acumen, organizational agility and strategic agility.

### 2) Pride

Purpose-driven professionals also report significantly higher pride in their work, teams and employers.

### 3) Fulfillment

Purpose-driven professionals exhibit a higher sense of overall fulfillment at work from their relationships, impact and growth.

### 4) Loyalty

Purpose-driven professionals show greater loyalty and job retention than money- and status-driven professionals.<sup>12</sup>

## IMPLICATIONS FOR HIRING

Employers seeking to create high performing teams and strong cultures should focus their recruiting efforts on purpose-driven professionals. They are significantly more likely to be great hires than money and status-oriented professionals.

To further increase the odds of success, hiring managers should screen for candidates that have a high self-awareness

Purpose-driven professionals represent a significant majority of outstanding performers in most organizations.

Potential hires that are able to articulate the role of work for the personally and what intrinsically drives them, will show higher tendencies of a purpose-driven orientation.

## Underperforming Purpose-Driven Professionals

While purpose-driven professionals tend to cluster among the highest performers in an organization, they also are often found at the other end of the continuum—struggling at the bottom. Between these two groups, the high and low performers, the difference emerged as being their self-awareness about what creates meaning in their work and their comfort advocating for their needs. Purpose-driven professionals who proactively design their work around their needs for meaning become high performers. Those who don't assert themselves as well often fall down.

about what brings meaning to their daily work and who have a track record to proactively making changes to their jobs to boost meaning. This can be gleaned by gauging the degree of self reflection, comfort in self-reference and transparent in communication throughout the hiring process. Potential hires that are able to articulate the role of work for the personally and what intrinsically drives them, will show higher tendencies of a purpose-driven orientation.

## CONCLUSIONS

In summary, these findings points to the clear conclusion that intrinsic metrics leave us with a new series of inputs, new protective insights and an entirely new taxonomy for our talent strategy tied to our most important business metrics.

The organizations that leverage purpose as a new metric will obtain the capabilities to identify a comprehensive profile of a high potential employee, determine how to identify and screen for more of these employees and uncover how to best support them in the job. This speaks to an alignment and betterment for the individual employee, the organization and society-at-large.

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