**Flourish**

**Leading people to Potential, Performance and Profit**

**The power of emotionally talented managers to take people to their ultimate best**

Summary

This book is for managers and how they can develop the people they lead into individuals who rise to their potential, make a significant impact to the business and thrive in personal fulfilment too. This is ‘flourishing’: an engagement of multiple resources including self-confidence, initiative and positivity in addition to the usual workplace talents and skills. In this state people produce outcomes that excel. Flourishing generates self-esteem and when work becomes a source of this, it becomes a place you love.

People who flourish are rare because workplaces do not identify nor aspire to this calibre of performance as a possibility. Furthermore they have little idea on how to achieve it. This is because the real drivers behind people flourishing in the workplace are poorly understood - the realm of positive human emotions. The single biggest instigator of these is the direct manager and his or her level of emotional talent. This consists of the emotional qualities that give rise to a positive sense of self and healthy interactions with people and the external world. When managers have high emotional talent their people flourish because they have the emotional resilience to stand back and let them shine without feeling threatened. This stands in contrast to the prevailing, self-serving style of management in most workplaces where personal glory outstrips the needs of people. The urgency for change is clear with pre-Covid employee disengagement at a shockingly high 85%, costing US7 trillion in lost productivity world-wide. Engaged, thriving people on the other hand add significant benefits in productivity and are the only ones driving an organisation forward- a critical need when the outlook is tough. The time for a review of how people are managed is way overdue and a major shake-up increasingly urgent.

# Introduction (from book)

The biggest blind spot in workplace effectiveness is the power of human potential.

Equally blind is how to achieve this potential in people.

Human potential is more than working to peak performance. At it’s ultimate best it captures the best of a person so what you get is talent and heart – the joy of giving one’s best, willingly and proactively. This is flourishing.

The problem is that human potential is rarely an aspiration for most workplaces; instead compliance is what they seek. Is it no wonder then that according to Gallup the world’s employers are suffering an engagement problem with only 15% of the global workforce engaged? Despite millions of dollars poured into employee benefits and reward programmes employee engagement and motivation remain low and alarmingly so in some European countries where engagement rates are between 8-10% despite generous benefits such as long vacation allowances. Let me put that in perspective; the only people moving your company forward are engaged people. This is easy to ignore when times are good but not when times are bad. But then it’s too late to invest in your people.

And this should matter to organisations. Engaged people are at least 21% more productive, incur lower costs, stay longer, help the organisation to recover faster in difficult times and produce better customer satisfaction scores. And they are also more emotionally fulfilled - an ethical imperative that has long gone unaddressed in most workplaces even though the debate is not new. When people flourish all these benefits are magnified, as is the possibility for work becoming a profoundly enriching place for people, both professionally and personally.

We are living in an age so technically progressive that we struggle to keep up with new advances. We have the most brilliant minds on earth who have given us more computer power in our mobile phones than NASA’s combined computer power in 1969, decoded the human genome, invented 3D printing and continue to advance artificial intelligence to unfathomable heights - and so much more. Yet workplaces still haven’t figured out what makes people thrive and love their work.

We are intellectually rich but emotionally poor.

Most motivation schemes still focus on extrinsic factors such as the trend towards wellness perks that include gyms and medical care for some large organisations. They are great no doubt but they miss the mark entirely when it comes to firing up the kind of enthusiasm that generates potential - and especially flourishing. This is because flourishing is ignited by emotional factors; loving what you do, achieving and feeling good about yourself when you do. Now here’s the crucial thing – it’s the direct manager that enables this to happen.

It is the manager and not the organisation nor the senior leadership team that creates the immediate environment in which people operate and whose personal behaviour and emotional make up determines the quality of peoples’ daily work lives especially their motivation to do great work. I have seen talented people leave a company - no matter how highly ranked it was as a great employer -rather than work for notoriously bad managers even if it means they’re leaving their dream jobs. The emotional make up of a manager and how it influences peoples’ lives is one of those unspoken realities in the workplace; we all know how some managers can afflict damage on their staff through their uncaring and even callous behaviours but rarely is anything done about it; instead it’s mind-bogglingly tolerated by the higher echelons. Most of us have probably endured at least one manager whose temperament, self-serving priorities or even ruthlessness have made working life an unfulfilling experience and emotional challenge. But when that emotional make up is made up of being supportive and caring, stands for peoples’ greatness and most crucially, is emotionally secure and self-assured so that the manager can stand back and let others shine, it impacts people in a whole different way. People bring their best selves to work; their talents, commitment and joy, in other words they flourish. The emotional make up of a manager that makes this happen is emotional talent.

These are the missing pieces in understanding how people thrive in work – the emotional drivers that make people flourish and the emotional talent of managers to get them there.

This also puts the spotlight on a big misconception about workplace loyalty; that people can be loyal to their organisations. No, people ultimately feel loyal to other people such as their managers and this is because of the human need to be seen and nourished by another human which a brand name or legal entity cannot. When someone does feel loyalty to their organisation it’s usually because a person such as their manager has served them in a time of need and they are profoundly grateful. This reinforces the importance of an organisation’s managers and how, when they are talented people managers they are a strategic asset driving the organisation forward. People skills of this calibre are not ‘soft’ skills that are merely nice to have when budgets allow training and nor should they be languishing behind more tantalising subjects such as marketing or the kudos of getting an MBA. They are critical skills that can affect your bottom line.

This book is written for managers and how to develop you into emotionally talented managers who can take the people you manage and turn them into high performers, reach their potential and flourish. This is good for them, for you and the organisation – it’s a triple win.

I know this to be possible because this book is based on my experience of leading teams of people who flourished beyond anything I could have predicted. In fact many transformed beyond what even they thought possible. Most of my career has been in the airline industry covering various commercial and analysis roles, first with British Airways in my home city of London, UK and then Cathay Pacific Airways in Hong Kong. For fourteen years I managed teams of people and like most managers my style started off reflecting that of the company culture or those who I most closely interacted with including my direct managers. What gradually transformed my people management approach was a deep undertaking of my own personal development starting in the late 1990s after doing an intensive workshop in London where I underwent a deep enquiry into myself to see why I was the way I was and what limiting beliefs stood in the way of my fulfilment. So transformative was the experience that it unleashed the pursuit of exploring the potential of human beings to transcend limitations and come into their most fulfilled selves. In my own time I explored different modalities and practices and thanks to my discounted airline travel I was able to fly to places all over the world. I went to India, USA, Thailand, Bali, UK, Brazil, Peru and more. I did deeply intensive personal enquiry work, silent meditations, ashram retreats, mindfulness and healing workshops and worked with coaches. I loved taking myself into new challenges and allowing new aspects of me to emerge and I loved deepening my self-awareness which allowed for a positive and healthy relationship with myself, with people and the world around me.

Inevitably this greater self-awareness also influenced me as a manager of people. I was now living and working in Hong Kong and had joined a newly set up e-business team in Cathay Pacific Airways with the responsibility of managing digital transformation of internal, business to business and customer facing processes. One of my first changes in management style was a shift from being a self-focused manager to being one who became more comfortable with standing back and giving people the opportunity to be out front and be seen. This came from gaining an assured sense of self, a fulfilment with who I was so I didn’t feel the need to chase opportunities for looking good as a way of getting validation. For example, I asked one of my team members, let’s call him Johnny to accompany me on a business trip to Tokyo and present some of the analysis work he had produced. It wasn’t the usual practice for managers to take their people to overseas business meetings especially to present to senior managers so Johnny was extremely grateful albeit nervous too.

Over time I released more control, gave people more autonomy and was careful to ensure people got the credit for their work. I became a more caring and approachable manager too. Although I was insistent on getting high quality results I did this with respecting people as capable adults and by guiding when necessary. What I hadn’t anticipated was the impact this would have on people. They proactively took ownership of their work and became enthused with their work seeing each piece of work through to the end with dedication and focus. They would stay as late as needed, check emails whilst on holiday and even visit colleagues in overseas offices when holidaying there to assist with progress on joint projects – without me expecting this I hasten to add. The quality of work also improved and projects were successfully delivered one after the other. This was all the more impressive as take up of the Internet and online solutions were still taking hold in Asia. Much of the work was creative and sometimes experimental in design and solution, which meant that there weren’t always clear-cut paths to success. This work needed initiative, sophisticated thinking and the dedication to see things through even when the IT teams weren’t sure how to deliver the technical solutions.

Over a period of about eight years I had consistently high performing teams of people working on increasingly complex and sophisticated projects. Among the successes was an award winning website that saved millions of dollars in servicing travel agent costs and one of the most advanced web analytics systems in Asia that revealed significant revenue and customer insights for the first time.

This was immensely rewarding, however what I really hadn’t anticipated was the transformation of peoples’ characters. They were fulfilled and becoming increasingly self-confident with a healthy self-belief. For example, people who could barely speak up in front of senior managers before were now presenting to large groups of people. These were not people who were recruited as high potentials for future senior management roles. In fact my teams usually consisted of a mix of those made ‘surplus’ from other departments and included administrators and junior managers as well as personal recruits from within the company and outside. Because of the many recruitment freezes that happened in line with economic impacts I often could not recruit the experienced experts I needed. The people in my teams were developed to become high achieving individuals that filled these roles superbly. In a testament to their successful growth and accomplishment many of them eventually achieved management roles with other companies and senior management roles with large international companies.

The experience revealed to me the possibility for people to transform in amazing and unpredictable ways – the degree of which I had only seen in the safe environment of intensive personal development workshops before now. Although I do not take away their own commitment and diligence the leap forward of this magnitude had to have been achieved by a catalyst. This is a manager who created the right conditions and opportunities for them to flourish. The key factor was however that the people changed *after* *I changed*.

These achievements happened despite being in an industry that experienced regular volatility especially in economic downturns and also with the SARS virus that affected Hong Kong in 2002, which suspended the airline industry for months. Furthermore I had no training budget for my people and pay increases were minimum or non-existent in difficult times. I saw that the power of an emotionally talented manager could take people to extraordinary places but also accelerate their growth and performance far more rapidly than any personal development training and even some workplace training ever could.

Nowhere in any part of my career, business education or management training had I been shown that this is what people were capable of when they’re led by a manager with the appropriate skills, those of emotional talent. This is when I realised I had to share this.

If anyone feels this is a self-sacrificing style of management this couldn’t be further from the truth. A manager reaps huge rewards through high performing teams of people – they make the manager look really good. Furthermore you get enormous loyalty back from people who are grateful for what you’ve done for them. One of the other management concerns is the additional time spent in their development however this is offset by the work you delegate to them as they grow.

A large part of the credibility of this book comes from my experience as a frontline manager who actually managed people and achieved these results. I am not an academic, a Human resources manager nor an organisational consultant. I am not dismissing these worthy roles but I write directly from the perspective of working in demanding environments, managing teams of people and implementing practices that not only worked but were gratifyingly successful for all of us as well as the organisation.

Although my writing reflects my experience of working in large companies, I realised through my case study interviews that the principles I espouse apply to any manager-employee relationship. I spoke to people who worked in charities, a PhD student and those working in local government offices as well as managers in large international companies and senior leaders in banks. The principles of what makes human relationships in the workplace work were the same.

What also came through these interviews was how wide spread manager indifference to people was, with some stories of downright abuse. Although this isn’t the focus of my book it was hard to ignore the state of reality especially in organisations that prided themselves on being good employers or even in small charities that had altruistic objectives. The impact of such managers doesn’t only damage motivation it affects the mental, emotional and physical health of employees, a point I bring up in this book because it has never been acknowledged or addressed in my entire 24 year career despite the fact that I myself have witnessed this several times. These stories also illustrate the point that people management skills are not considered to be necessary and as a result managers rarely get any training, something that often shows up in sub-optimal results and the sorry state of many people’s working lives.

This book is for managers in any industry and level; it can apply to new, middle and senior managers who lead people. It is especially relevant for managing knowledge workers in a world that is increasingly unpredictable and complex; where managers don’t have all the answers especially with the rapid pace of innovative technology and where the need for agility - to learn and adapt quickly becomes key for all employees. This is also a good place to debunk some long held beliefs about managers versus leaders; that managers manage processes and maintain the status quo while leaders create vision and lead change. The truth is that in this rapidly changing world managers have to demonstrate adaptability, innovation and continuous improvement and role model these behaviours to their people so that everyone is growing, contributing and surviving.

I have written this book directly for managers without the need for your organisation’s senior leaders or HR people to endorse the principles enclosed. This because you can develop and practice your emotional talent without the need for their permission. You own your character and you choose how to interact with and support your people. When I interviewed successful leaders with a strong people focus and asked them what made them such strong people champions they said it stemmed from their strongly held personal beliefs about the way people should be treated. It did not come from instructions from senior leaders nor from anything demonstrated in the company culture.

Your ability to get on with your own development and progress also means you don’t need to wait for the lengthy process of your top leaders to learn, approve and implement this. You can get started immediately and see the results quickly.

My intention is that this book has global appeal and is relevant to managers in London, USA as well as in Hong Kong and India and all other countries. I have written with my international experience in mind, as someone who has managed people of different cultures and interacted with people all over the world. I myself am what I call a hybrid culture – a British born Indian, which gives me multiple reference points with which to translate the world. This, I hope avoids the pitfall of many western writers who prescribe solutions from the observations and experiences of their one dimensional world. My personal development experiences have also been shared with diverse nationalities, people and cultures in many different parts of the world and I can say ultimately, the core human needs and aspirations are not that different.

The book is divided in three parts. Part 1 presents the case for people to flourish into their potential and why managers are the key to make that happen. Part 2 covers emotional talent and the three parts that make this up with lots of examples of how each element looks like in action. Part 3 includes practices and exercises for developing emotional talent.

The book is written very intentionally as a practical tool to learn, implement, change and become an emotionally talented manager who leads people to flourish. I encourage you to read it not as a detached observer but as someone who can relate to the examples, facts and accounts. Put yourself into the situations.

I’ve also addressed different ways of learning and enabling behavioural change. For the rational manager mind I have included a strong case for change backed up with data and published research including neurology and how the brain reacts to emotional stimuli.

To enable behavioural change and the process of realisation – that ‘wow I get it’ moment, I have included reflection points for you to consider at the end of the chapter or a section. I encourage you strongly to not skip these as they initiate the process of self-enquiry and change and have deliberately been designed to enable the chapter content to apply to your life. The case studies and stories of real work situations should also encourage this. Part 3 of the book is all about doing and practicing the exercises, which are an important part of the development process.

To help you with the learning process you can download a workbook from my website [www.harjeetv.com](http://www.harjeetv.com). This will encourage you to write down thoughts and plans and keep your learning coherent and moving forward.

I am aware that many learning preferences are about diving in and getting the key need to knows quickly. This is the mental model of knowledge acquisition not behavioural shift – the mode of most work training. However in recognition of this I have included many examples of what and how to put things in action so you can implement practices quickly and then reflect on the experience and results to ‘get it’. This also addresses a point that I often came across in published research. When the research identified employee needs such as respect, trust or growth managers would say they didn’t know how to show or implement these! This not only surprised me but proved how disconnected the workplace is with human emotions.

My final words are on terminology. I have always recoiled at the terms ‘staff’ and ‘employees’ to describe non-management people. They are terms of subordination where the word ‘staff’ feels like it should belong to an old age of scullery maids, footmen and butlers and the word ‘employees’ not only puts the large mass of working individuals in the category of ‘other’ in relation to managers and senior leaders it is also technically wrong as every single person working for an organisation is an employee including the chairperson assuming he or she doesn’t have ownership. I have therefore used the word ‘people’ and only use the word ‘employee’ when clarification is needed.

The word ‘manager’ also refers to supervisors who have people reporting to them.