soundview
Executive Book Summaries®

Purpose Driven People

Creating business agility and sustainable growth

by **Alize Hofmeester**
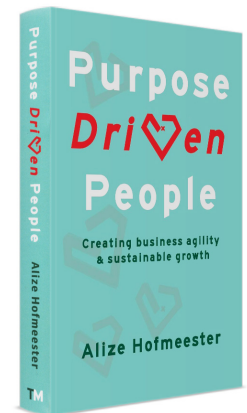
Contents

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Agility isn't a buzzword anymore. It's a tool that organizations of all sizes and types desperately need, but not all of them know how to achieve it. The key? Starting with purpose.

Many companies fail to treat their purpose like something that can be designed, but carefully designing your company's purpose will come to define everything that matters most about your organization—including financial success. Meanwhile, communication and leadership are essential at every level of your organization. Otherwise, employees become disengaged, leaders fail to lead, and your organization lacks direction and focus. This adds up to an organization that's anything but agile. In ***Purpose Driven People*** we learn that, in order to achieve that true agility, you must first identify the constraints standing in the way of your organization—even if those constraints are your own biases, weaknesses, or hangups.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How focusing on purpose helps companies create sustainable growth.
- Why addressing barriers in the way of agility is essential to help your business reach its potential.
- How turning managers into role models can transform your company for the better.
- Why tools and systems should always be seen as means to an end, rather than the end itself.

Introduction

New technologies create new possibilities for all companies, whether they were founded today or a hundred years ago. Customers can order products when they want and get them faster than ever.

Companies that are tuned into what matters to their customers and employees are able to stay agile and hold the key to their own future. We're seeing companies emerge that provide products or services entirely in the digital space, and they focus entirely on the needs of their employees and customers.

The result? More success, more innovation, and happier people on both sides of the transaction. So what does that mean for us, as people and organizations who want to harness that power? It means we have to focus first on purpose, and let our businesses and organizations move forward from that vantage point.

Purpose

Automation is on the rise. Activities, tasks, and responsibilities are shifting. People either adapt to new roles, or they don't. Employees come and go. Customer and employee demands are changing. What do you actually know about the people who work in your organization?

The key is to move past surface-level questions about the people in your organization, and get down to the business of:

- Improving working relationships

- Defining an organizational, departmental, or team purpose

- Determining the influence of purpose on talent, jobs, roles, and agility

- Practical experiments and work methods for creating a purpose

- Design a Purpose in Four Steps

What exactly goes into formulating a purpose in actual practice, and is there a difference between formulating a purpose for your organization as a whole and formulating one for your team?

You can form a purpose in four steps, and they're the same for all levels of an organization. Regardless of whether you're working on a start-up, scale-up, major corporation, small business, department, or team, the steps are the same.

Step 1: Do research and collection as much information as possible.

Step 2: Create a storyline

Step 3: Test the storyline out on the target group

Step 4: Define the purpose

Communication & Awareness

As soon as an organization decides to communicate to its people that a change is needed, they start to think about the recipient of the message. Better yet, they start to think for the recipient. But how well do we know the recipient? Do we actually know the recipient's needs and how they will react? We often think we communicate clearly. But when we check in with employees afterwards, it turns out that everyone has interpreted the message differently or less than the whole message has come across.

Communication is the basis for creating awareness and interaction, which is why communication is the foundation of a self-organizing team.

Keep Communicating

When can we stop communicating? It is a frequently asked question. The question behind it is usually about when it is the right time to stop communicating about a transition. In today's complex world, you have to keep adapting and developing all the time. It is, therefore, not so easy to pinpoint when exactly a transition ends and the 'regular' work begins. In any case, it is true that transitioning organizations go through different phases, whereby each phase requires a different communication message.

The purpose doesn't change, but the path to get there does.

Identifying Constraints

Building agile organizations is like a game of Jenga. For years, we have built structure on top of structure. The larger the organization, the more extensive the job framework, the more complex the processes, the greater the number of separate departments and silos. When we change to more agile models, we basically break down those silos bit by bit. Will the tower stay upright or come tumbling down? It's vital to take constraints and barriers to progress seriously and understand what will happen if you don't. From structural

and visible constraints to invisible contractions, you need awareness of what stands in your way to enhanced agility.

What to Do with a Constraint

Eliminate constraints! While this is easier said than done, it is essentially the only thing you can do when you, as an organization or as a human being, want to achieve your goals and pursue your purpose.

In the previous paragraphs, you read how a constraint blocks progress and has a demotivating effect. It stops you and your organization from developing and making progress. The only remedy is to identify those constraints and do something about them.

Role Modelling

What do role models and leaders have in common? Are managers now all of a sudden leaders, or do we not need managers at all anymore? What exactly do those concepts mean? When are you a manager, and when are you a leader?

Our vision of leadership and what makes a leader has changed. As we head into the future of work, leadership takes on a different meaning. To succeed, we must all transform from managers to leaders, and from leaders into true role models. We must reduce the use of terms like 'manager' or 'superior,' instead focusing on the impact we have on the people around us and how we can inspire them to follow and excel.

How to Improve as a Leader

Everyone in an organization is part of the system and has a role to play in the transition to agility— perhaps even that of a role model. Like most people, you probably struggle to sow vulnerability or to admit to finding something difficult, or having overlooked something. But it's never too late to talk about difficult subjects or to tell your organization or team you made a mistake or misunderstood something.

What is your story? What example do you set or want to set? Do you have something you're passionate about, a purpose? How do you communicate it?

Leadership Journey

Rate yourself from a scale of one to ten on the following statements to assess were you stand as a role model:

- I have a clearly defined purpose that matches the work

I do and my department's and organization's purpose.

- I actively share this purpose with colleagues through storytelling.

- I am aware of my biases, prejudices, and blind spots.

- It is important to me that we have role models at the organization and I regularly talk with colleagues about what a role model is.

- In the department and in the team, we have agreed on the kind of behavior role models should display and how we intend to challenge each other on that behavior.

- As a lead, I regularly seek feedback on my role from peers and employees.

- I encourage colleagues to keep engaging with each other.

- Whenever there are innovations that are interesting for our organizations and aligned with the purpose, I discuss them with colleagues and we look at how to integrate them into the organization.

There has to be a solid base from which to operate as a leadership team, and a shared understanding of what agility means for the organization, employees, and the leadership team itself. After that, space will emerge for further development. The basis lies at the heart of the People Journey Circle.

Steering Towards Innovation

The pace at which one employee works influences the overall pace of the team or even the department. The team is only as fast as its slowest member. The challenge lies in getting the slowest member to accelerate to the group's pace. Starlings have that ability. People do, too, provided you extend your feelers and are willing to listen to the people around you.

When teams pull together in delivering a product, each team will have an effect on the pace at which the other team works.

If one team gets stuck, the other team cannot proceed. The organization is one large system that everyone is a part of. Whether you work there or otherwise provide something to the organization, your behavior and way of working and thinking, as well as the speed at which you work, all have a bearing on the value and relevance of the system as a whole. To excel, we shouldn't be boosting our top perform-

ers—we should be elevating our lowest performers.

Learning Organization

Continuous learning has never been as important as it is today. New technologies follow each other in rapid succession. The online world creates new roles, such as 'influencer' or 'YouTuber.' Roles that emerge organically in generations growing up with the latest technology, and for whom these new roles are the most normal thing in the world.

It's vital for us to start thinking and learning differently, addressing the conditions and barriers that affect learning and finding ways to remove them. We must develop a learning mindset and always be willing to experiment in order to learn. This will help us make the leap to becoming a learning organization.

The Ecosystem

As human beings, we are selective. Our brain decides what we see and don't see, based on our worldview and our existing biases. As a result, we often don't see what we do not expect to see. You can either hide behind this comfortable wall or take it as an incentive to look beyond the obvious.

The things that impact how we perceive the world are our ecosystem, and it impacts the way we think, perceive, act, and behave. Our ecosystem isn't necessarily a bad thing, but if it's invisible to us, then we can quickly become blind to its effects. We can become blind to our biases or the comfortable half-truths we tell ourselves, which stands in the way of continuous learning discussed earlier.

Means and Ends

Tools matter. When you decide to paint your house, you would do well to buy quality brushes, rollers, and paints. Without the right materials, chances are your walls will not look impeccable when you're done.

That being said, it doesn't mean you always have to get the latest of the latest in tools and materials. Tools are a means to an end, not an end in their own right. True, working with the latest technology can be a lot of fun and make your organization feel like you're on the cutting edge. But all tools, even this book, should be used with questions such as:

Does it help you fulfill your purpose?

What does it deliver, and for whom?

Ensure that you have satisfying answers to these questions before adopting any new tool, system, or idea. Ideas are powerful, and they can transform your organization faster than you think.

Alize Hofmeester is a successful purpose-driven entrepreneur, author, and inspirational speaker. She is considered a true visionary and thought leader in the field of business agile transformations. Alize advises and coaches boardroom leaders and transformation teams on mindset, leadership, and the people side of change on how to stay relevant to their customers. For more information about Alize, go to www.twinxter.com