



**BUSINESS** *digest*

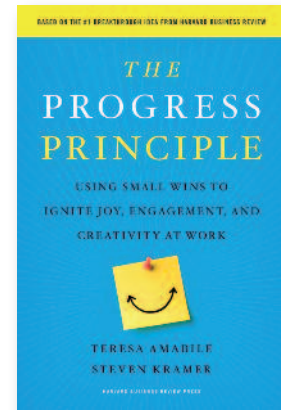
A sense of **progress**:  
important source of engagement



# 3

## POINT OF VIEW: The Progress Principle

Based on the book by **Teresa AMABILE** and **Steven KRAMER** (Harvard Business Review Press, August 2011).



# 6

## JOB AID: How to support progress on a daily basis

Based on “Start the New Year with Progress,” by **Teresa AMABILE** and **Steven KRAMER** (Harvard Business Review, December 2011) and *The Progress Principle* by the same authors (Harvard Business Review Press, August 2011)



# 8

## INTERVIEW: A culture of progress at Procter & Gamble

Interview with **Craig B. WYNETT**, Chief Learning Officer at Procter & Gamble, January 2012.



### In brief

#### The ability to make consistent progress in daily work fosters the healthiest workplaces and best performances.

Managers can either facilitate such progress — or stand in its way! Via comprehensive research and studies, Drs. Amabile and Kramer reveal the links between progress, managerial support, and performance results.

#### How can managers support progress on a daily basis?

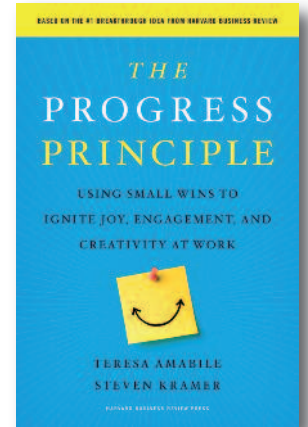
Via a series of actions that any manager can choose to practice. To stay on track in your support of progress, take five minutes at the end of every day to complete a progress checklist.

#### For areas involving conceptual, creative thinking, there is a growing awareness of the importance of progress to staff engagement.

According to Craig Wynett, Chief Learning Officer at P&G, it is thus up to managers to provide the kind of frameworks that focus teams on their “love of the game” — on making progress in the work itself!

# The Progress Principle

Based on *The Progress Principle: Using Small Wins to Ignite Joy, Engagement, and Creativity at Work* by **Teresa AMABILE** and **Steven KRAMER** (Harvard Business Review Press, August 2011).



**It is clear that motivated employees perform best. But what is the key driver of motivation? Making consistent, daily progress in the work itself, say Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer, whose research sheds light on the underlying processes of motivation, revealing the most effective principles and behaviors for combatting employee disengagement.**

Most people consider emotional displays unprofessional. So when clients change their mind about what they want after the work is done, the boss rejects a seemingly valid proposal, or, on a more positive note, a colleague provides valuable help, we usually try not to reveal the full extent of our internal responses. This gap between observable work life and what goes on below the surface is the focus of a comprehensive research project led by Drs. Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer. Their study of the hidden emotions, perceptions, and motivations that underlie observable work life proves once and for all that positive thoughts and feelings measurably improve performance results and, perhaps more radically, that the most effective way to foster such positivity in staff is by supporting their ability to make progress in their work.

## MEMO

- **The power of small wins:** the ability to make consistent progress in daily work is the most powerful driver of employee engagement and peak performance results.
- **The progress loop:** in a positive work environment, past progress fuels future progress.
- **Support progress:** managers are in key position to support the progress of their teams on a daily basis.

## NOTHING MOTIVATES BETTER THAN PROGRESS

What keeps videogame players focused hour after hour? “Progress bars that are constantly visible onscreen as players engage in the game.”\* So why not consider introducing an equivalent to videogame “progress bars” in the workplace?

### ■ Progress makes for the best workdays

Amabile and Kramer identify three types of events that take place far more frequently than any others on the best workdays — i.e., days where staff felt the most positive about themselves, their work, and their employers — as self-reported by employees, leading the authors to identify what they call the “three key” drivers of employee satisfaction at work:

1. **Progress:** an instance of moving forward in the work itself
2. **Catalysts:** direct support of the work, such as receiving clearly defined goals and adequate resources
3. **Nourishers:** emotional support such as encouragement

Progress events, which took place on 76% of the best work life days, were found to be the most influential drivers of satisfaction (see the table “What happens on the best days?”). In

addition, it turns out that over 28% of objectively small incidents elicited big reactions. In the words of Amabile and Kramer, “even events that people thought were unimportant often had powerful effects on inner work life ... in managing people, you really do have to sweat the small stuff.”

### ■ How hidden thoughts and feelings affect performance

Comparing (invisible) emotional and cognitive states, as self-reported in staff diary entries, with performance, as evaluated by colleagues, led to a conclusive finding: productivity is higher when staff feels positively and lower when emotions are negative. For example, study participants were 50% more likely to have a creative idea on days when reporting positive moods than when reporting negative moods. Similarly, according to Gallup, 86% of employees with high levels of engagement in their work report often feeling happy at work, compared to 11% of the disengaged. Staff engagement significantly affects bottom-line results: a 12-month study performed in 2006 by Towers Watson-ISR across 50 different countries found that the operating income of companies with the highest levels of employee engagement increased by 19.2%, while those reporting lower levels declined 32.7%.\*\*

## WHAT PREVENTS MANAGERS FROM SUPPORTING PROGRESS

“In light of our results, managers who say—or secretly believe—that employees work better under pressure, uncertainty, unhappiness, or fear are just plain wrong,” say Amabile and Kramer. When managers adhere to certain blocking

## The Authors

Steven KRAMER received his doctorate in developmental psychology from the University of Virginia and today is an independent researcher and writer. Teresa AMABILE received her doctorate in psychology from Stanford University and is professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School.

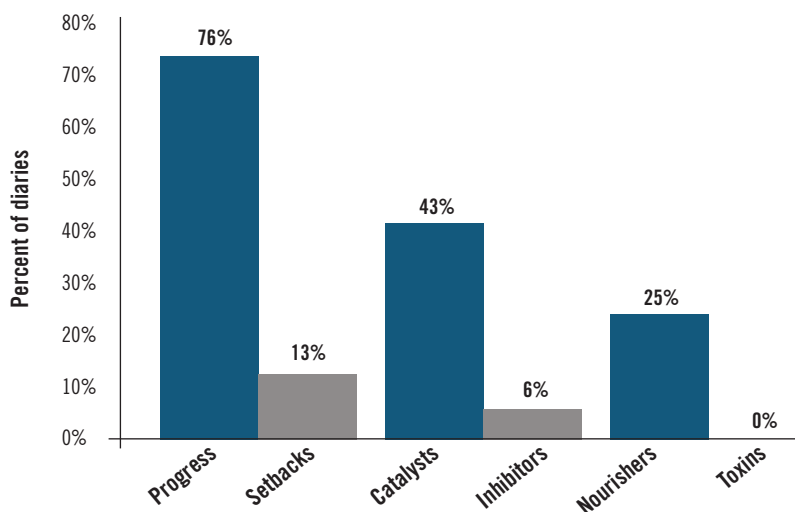


beliefs, they are prone to obstructing rather than facilitating progress.

### ■ Blocking belief: “Progress is an individual responsibility.”

“If you’ve hired the best people, and structured your organization well, it’s up to them to make progress in their work. You shouldn’t have to worry about facilitating it everyday.” Or so said dozens of top executives from companies such as Coca-Cola, Microsoft, and Nokia. Fascinated by a seemingly significant management blind spot, Amabile and Kramer conducted a more comprehensive survey of the issue, speaking with 669 managers from dozens of companies around the world. Of the managers surveyed, only 5% identified supporting progress from among five possible choices as the most effective ...

## What happens on the best days?



The authors asked 26 project teams (238 knowledge workers in total) in seven companies in three industries to complete daily electronic diary entries for the duration of a single project (19 weeks on average). The entries were structured using scaled ratings to describe emotions, perceptions, motivations, and productivity levels as well as a request for a short narrative describing a daily work event (64,000 specific workday events were reported and analyzed). Participants each completed an average of 50 daily questionnaires, adding up to 12,000 entries.

... managerial tool for motivating employees, while the large majority of those surveyed instead ranked it “dead last.”

### ■ Blocking belief: “One reward compensates for a thousand frustrations.”

“Progress and inner work life feed each other,” note the authors. But the same is true for setbacks and frustration; in fact, negative cycles are more powerful than positive. “The negative effect of a setback event on happiness was twice as strong as the positive effect of a progress event on happiness, and the power of a setback event to increase frustration was over three times as strong as that of a progress event to decrease frustration.” It is thus more important for managers to focus on NOT obstructing progress than on devising ways to proactively motivate others to make progress. In other words, people are naturally motivated all on their own to make progress in their work, but they are also easily demotivated. “You can never create a problem-free bubble for your people,” say Amabile and Kramer. “Rather, focus on providing people with what they need to overcome the obstacles they inevitably face.”

## HOW TO FACILITATE PROGRESS

The support of individual progress is thus a management responsibility and a key factor of performance. This support does not relate to personality or background but instead consists in a series of actions that any manager can choose to practice.

### ■ Resist the temptation to micromanage

A common stumbling block for managers in supporting progress is the tendency to micromanage. A manager that instead empowers team members reinforces their ability to derive a sense of meaning from the work they do and thereby supports the drive to make progress.

- Provide autonomy: give teams clear goals and then let them

## Engagement is not a question of personality

“Isn’t it possible ... that certain people actually perform better when their inner work life gets worse—when they are unhappy, view their managers as adversaries, and feel motivated by fear or anger rather than the work itself?” No, respond Amabile and Kramer, who investigated this possibility by accounting for the personality and demographics of every study participant. After consistently observing performance rise in response to workplace wins and fall in response to workplace setbacks, for “happy” and “unhappy” people alike, the authors conclude that the positivity of employee perceptions and emotions has little to do with individual personalities and more to do with workplace events in which managers can play a large role.

## Three actions that support small wins

According to the study, leaders that effectively support progress:

1. Took ownership of problems: took an active role in solving the problems of individual team members in their work, such as project delays, customer complaints, etc.,
2. Respected the competence of others by involving team members in problem-solving processes
3. 3. Asked teams what they needed and got it for them: “Once in a while, simply ask your people what you can do to help them move forward”

decide how reach those goals

- Provide support when there are problems: try to respond to progress reports like an involved team member rather than a dictator.

### ■ Breaking vicious cycles of demotivation

Even when top leaders fail to support progress, a skilled team manager can mitigate the consequences, interrupting a potentially vicious cycle. How can local leaders help their teams to overcome obstacles to progress?

- Respond calmly and constructively to negative facts (such as team oversights or technical snags)
- Address problems quickly and openly, “not by panicking or pointing fingers to assess personal blame, but by analyzing the problems, identifying causes, and developing a coordinated action plan.”
- Involve the entire team in discussing problems and action planning.

Middle managers are in position to create a “temporary oasis” of progress for their teams, even within companies that suffer from serious organizational obstacles. However, without executive support, it is only a matter of time before they run out of resources, burnout, and/or leave the company. ■

\* Andy Brown of Perfect World Entertainment and Clive Thompson of Wired magazine as paraphrased by Amabile and Kramer in *The Progress Principle* (p.88).

\*\* Findings as quoted in “Why CSR’s Future Matters to Your Company,” by Susan McPherson (HBR Blog Network, January 2012).

Supporting the progress of teams from day to day is an ideal way for managers to satisfy at once their own needs, those of their subordinates, and the company's, note the authors of *The Progress Principle* — a happy reconciliation that is not always as simple as this to achieve!



# How to support progress on a daily basis

Based on "Start the New Year with Progress," by **Teresa AMABILE** and **Steven KRAMER** (*Harvard Business Review*, December 2011) and "The daily progress checklist," as presented in *The Progress Principle* by the same authors (Harvard Business Review Press, August 2011)

## 1 / KEEP WORK MEANINGFUL FOR EMPLOYEES

The truism that people are naturally motivated to make progress in daily work depends on the work itself being meaningful to them. The more meaningful the work is to an individual, the more impact progress will have on employee engagement. Indeed, according to a 2003 survey, "meaningful work was valued by Americans more than any other job feature — including pay and promotions." To protect staff perceptions that the work they do is meaningful, so that making progress will continue to motivate, adopt these three behaviors:

- Ensure recognition of how the work contributes to the organization
- Provide autonomy, which leads to a sense of ownership over the work
- Assign work that enables individuals to learn new skills versus work for which they are overqualified

## 2 / PUBLICLY RECOGNIZE TEAM PROGRESS

People know when they have made progress via feedback. Celebrate progress to increase the positive feelings of staff towards themselves, their work, and the company.

- Make a list of all the progress made by individuals, teams or the company over the past year, the past month, or the past week, and share it: "All too often, progress gets ignored as people move from one task or project to another," point out Amabile and Kramer. "Simply noting what was accomplished and how it contributed to the goals of the organization can have a big impact on how people feel about themselves, the organization, and the work they do."
- Do not be afraid to celebrate: "People who work hard deserve the opportunity to celebrate and rejoice in what they have accomplished. It nourishes them psychologically and motivates them to accomplish even more in the coming year."

## 3 / DEAL WITH SETBACKS AS THEY ARISE

Taken separately, none of the following three actions seem extraordinary, say the authors: what makes them characteristic of great leadership is the ability to practice the following behaviors day in and day out.

- Diagnose and correct problems, rather than assigning blame.
- Deal with obstacles to progress in daily work as to they occur, rather than putting off difficult problems.
- Provide the resources and help employees need to move ahead in their work (ask what they need and get it for them!). ●●●

# 4 / THE DAILY PROGRESS CHECKLIST

Take five minutes at the end of the workday to complete the following checklist.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Progress</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Briefly describe one or two events today that indicated a small breakthrough in the tasks at hand.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Catalysts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Was the team provided with clear short- and long-term GOALS for meaningful work?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Were team members provided sufficient AUTONOMY to solve problems and take ownership of the project?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did they have all the RESOURCES needed to move forward efficiently?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did they have sufficient TIME to focus on meaningful work?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did I give or get them HELP when they needed it?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did I discuss LESSONS from today's successes and problems with my team?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did I help IDEAS FLOW freely within the group?</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Nourishers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did I show RESPECT to team members by recognizing their contributions, listening to their ideas, and treating them as trusted professionals?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did I ENCOURAGE team members who faced difficult challenges?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did I SUPPORT team members who had a personal or professional problem?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is there a sense of personal and professional CAMARADERIE within the team?</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Setbacks</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Describe briefly one or two events today that indicated a small setback in the work.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Inhibitors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Was there any confusion over long- or short-term GOALS for meaningful work?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Were employees overly RESTRICTED in their work and thus lacking feelings of ownership of their project?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did they lack any of the RESOURCES they needed to move forward?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did they lack sufficient TIME to focus on meaningful work?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did I or others fail to provide needed HELP?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did I "punish" failure?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did I or others cut off the presentation or debate of IDEAS prematurely?</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Toxins</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did I DISRESPECT any team members by failing to recognize their contributions, not listening to their ideas, or not treating them as trusted professionals?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did I DISCOURAGE a member of the team in anyway?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did I NEGLECT a team member who had a personal or professional problem?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is there tension between members of the team or between team members and me?</li> </ul>
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**Inner work life**

Did I see any indications of the quality of my subordinates' inner work lives today?

- Their perceptions of the work, team, management, firm
- Their emotions
- Their motivations

What specific events might have affected inner work life today?

**Action plan**

- What can I do tomorrow to strengthen the support identified and to provide the support that is lacking?
- What can I do tomorrow to start eliminating the obstacles to progress identified?

Source: adapted from "the daily progress checklist" in *The Progress Principle*, page 170.

# A culture of progress at Procter & Gamble

Interview with **Craig B. WYNETT**, Chief Learning Officer at Procter & Gamble, January 2012.

**How do you motivate staff to maintain their peak performance levels? By setting the right kind of frameworks and establishing virtuous cycles of progress, says Craig B. Wynett, Chief Learning Officer at Procter & Gamble!**

## BIOGRAPHY



Craig WYNETT joined The Procter & Gamble Company in 1988 in the U.S. health care sector and has continued since then to advance through increasing levels of responsibility in the company. Today, Craig B. Wynett is the Chief Learning Officer at P&G. He holds a bachelor's of science in biochemistry from the University of Georgia and a master's in business administration from the University of Virginia's Darden School, where he recently received the "Distinguished Alumni Award."

Before becoming Chief Learning Officer, Craig B. Wynett was appointed founding director and then General Manager of P&G's Corporate New Ventures Organization (CNV). Under his leadership, CNV produced many of P&G's most successful new products, including Swiffer, ThermaCare, and Press & Seal. "In working in innovation, piloting is our version of the progress principle. The Swiffer Mop is the perfect example of the power of progress," says Wynett. "We made prototypes and worked with test markets. There are no shortcuts! To get beyond the status quo, you have to make small moves, piloting within a wide range of acceptable risk." Affirming Amabile and Kramer's findings in *The Progress Principle*, Wynett says, "science is proving what we

always knew instinctively to be true: nothing is more fundamental to people's ability to succeed than establishing a positive self-reinforcing concept, a virtuous cycle, of progress."

### Demystifying knowledge work

15 years ago, Dr. Amabile was already researching the concepts presented in *The Progress Principle*, which is what brought her into contact with Wynett at P&G. "I met Teresa 15 years or so ago to discuss her thesis on intrinsic motivation," recalls Wynett. In fact, Wynett has worked closely with many cognitive psychologists over the years, due to his focus on clearing up the mystery surrounding human creativity. "Regarding creativity and innovation, traditionally the process has been viewed more as

alchemy than chemistry, which reduces the manager to a kind of cheerleader." Indeed, leaders cannot actively supervise an unknowable process. But, fortunately, studies such as Amabile's inquiry into inner work life are presenting scientific insight into the complex tasks of knowledge work, reframing formerly hazy fields such as innovation into reliable and controllable processes. In particular, Wynett describes the growing awareness of the importance of virtuous cycles to human motivation and its implications for progress. "We do not simply react to the world; we anticipate it based on past experience. So setting up virtuous cycles, where what happened before supports what we want to happen next, is fundamental," explains Wynett. "Making progress is just such a positive self- ...



... reinforcing concept, a virtuous cycle: progress begets progress.”

### Passion fuels progress

“My old friend Peter Drucker used to talk about managing yourself not just for success, but for significance, and that is a great way to think about work — in terms of doing things that matter, of purpose-driven progress.” In fact, a fundamental prerequisite for the power of progress is the sense of contribution and achievement that we gain from doing our work. Framing work in these

shape an environment that shifts the mindset from getting credit for the work, to the work itself as its own reward. This can happen only when they know YOU know the score. That boils down to trust, to the sense that, in the manager/subordinate relationship, you each have the best interests of the other in mind.” Wynett suggests reinforcing trust by providing support that goes beyond the call of duty. “The idea of a manager doing something ‘they did not have to do’ is a powerful way to contribute to intrinsic motivation. For exam-

they are pre-requisites,” argues Wynett. “Say you tell your design team to make a new bottle. You tell them you have a penny to spend. They say they cannot succeed with that constraint on their creativity. Six months later, they come back with a bottle that costs 25 cents and is the best looking bottle you have ever seen. There was very little creativity required in that scenario.” Instead, according to Wynett, the manager should firmly provide clear boundaries. Trying to achieve those challenges is where creativity comes in. “If the manager frames the project from the very beginning as, ‘give me a 25-cent look for one cent,’ and provides the context for that constraint, then the problem is entirely different.”

## “A fundamental prerequisite for the power of progress is the sense of contribution and achievement that we gain from doing our work.”

terms, notes Wynett, can lead colleagues to change the ways that they evaluate their jobs. “Many corporate reward and recognition mechanisms — raises, promotions, stock options — are extrinsic motivators. They can reinforce innovation, block it if they are withdrawn, but cannot cause someone to be more creative. That requires intrinsic motivation; love of the work itself.”

### Reinforcing intrinsic motivation

But how can managers deliver intrinsic motivators, which are primarily private and even subconscious emotions, perceptions, and drives? “Extrinsic rewards that are tied to performance can result in employees that are preoccupied with getting credit for their accomplishments. The manager’s role is to help

ple, I am currently working on projects where a high degree of diverse expertise is required. Consequently, progress is fundamentally related to gaining knowledge. So I brought in a Nobel Prize winner in an area that is currently under focus to talk with teams. This makes people feel special. It is inspiring.”

### Enforcing controls to make progress

“The worst example of how managers fail to support progress that I can think of is actually a very popular management strategy. It goes something like, ‘leave your best people alone.’ It is hard to find a business school graduate today who does not say, ‘I wish management would just get out of my way.’ But, in fact, real world constraints are not barriers to progress,

“Nobody really knows why we do what we do. Did we really like that job candidate we just interviewed because of the objective quality of his answers or because we had a mug of hot cocoa right before the interview? ... According to those who study human behavior, most of our decisions are controlled by the subconscious.” What does this mean for managers looking to enhance reliably the performance of their teams? According to Wynett, managers should be looking to reproduce the subconscious context of progress — the emotions, perceptions, and motivations of teams when they were at their peak performance. Given Amabile and Kramer’s findings, this means setting positive frameworks! “Joy and fear have a lot of the same telltale signs: surprise, a lack of control. A manager has to be aware of the power of context: the same set of facts can be experienced as enlightening and vital or as frightening and constraining, depending on the way the leaders present them.” ■



Some Procter & Gamble products.

READ IT AGAIN *BUSINESS DIGEST*■ **EMPOWERING THROUGH VISION: GIVING EMPLOYEES THE FREEDOM THEY NEED TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES**

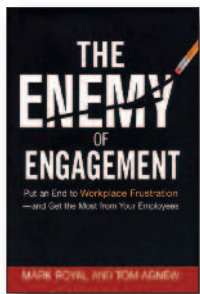
Isn't showing a certain amount of authoritarianism in a crisis situation the hallmark of a strong leader? And yet, this tendency endangers team morale and creativity. Based on the book of Filip Vandendriessche, *Diriger sans imposer*, Éditions d'Organisation, 2007, and the interviews of Joost Schrevens, health security consultant for the petrochemical industry and Marc Desenfans, CEO of Unilever Ivory Coast.

*Business Digest no. 188, September 2008.*

■ **HOW TO BRING JOY BACK INTO YOUR WORK**

How can we make the best of work, and perhaps even enjoy it? Based on *The Joy of Work? Jobs, Happiness, and You* by Peter Warr and Guy Clapperton, Routledge, September 2009, and the interviews of Ben Willmott, employee relations adviser, The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (UK) and Mike Rogers, founder and principal owner at SecondG.net, December 2009.

*Business Digest no. 202, December 2009.*


**THE ENEMY OF ENGAGEMENT: PUT AN END TO WORKPLACE FRUSTRATION AND GET THE MOST FROM YOUR EMPLOYEES**

By Mark Royal and Tom Agnew, Amacom, November 2011.

A study by global HR consultant Hay Group shows that between a third and a half of employees believe their working environment hinders their productivity. But perhaps the greatest enemy of performance is actually the frustration itself. This is what Hay researchers Mark Royal and Tom Agnew assert. "We are not talking about people who are genuinely grumpy or lazy. On the contrary, we are referring to motivated people that organizational obstacles are

preventing from reaching their potential." Royal and Agnew urge managers to take this problem seriously, because dealing with it effectively will unleash latent productivity. The authors explain why certain practices meant to boost performance (evaluations, job descriptions, resource organization, etc.) are actually counter-productive, and they lay out alternative processes for helping dissatisfied workers unleash their potential.


**THE OPTIMISM BIAS: A TOUR OF THE IRRATIONALLY POSITIVE BRAIN**

By Tali Sharot, Pantheon Books, June 2011.

"To make progress," says neuroscientist Dr. Tali Sharot, "we need to be able to imagine alternative realities — better ones — and we need to believe that we can achieve them." People tend to adopt a more positive outlook on life than the facts can justify, which motivates them to achieve their goals. What is more, recent studies indicate that optimists in general work longer hours, earn more, and even save more. At the same time, overly positive outlooks can also lead to

dangerous miscalculations and irresponsible behaviors. Are we hardwired for (irrational) optimism? How do the brains of optimists and pessimists differ? How can people benefit from the advantages of optimism while avoiding the pitfalls? Answering these questions and more, Dr. Sharot uses behavioral, neuropsychiatric, and brain-imaging methods to investigate the human bias towards optimism and how it affects the ways in which we live and work.



## ON THE WEB

**RSAanimate – Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us**

<http://comment.rsablogs.org.uk/2010/04/08/rsa-animate-drive/>

An engaging animated video by RSAorg of a talk by author Daniel Pink on how intrinsic motivation functions in the workplace. Pink provides concrete examples of the differences between motivation in complicated tasks that require conceptual, creative thinking and simple, straightforward tasks. Specifically, he explains how autonomy, mastery, and purpose motivate knowledge workers more effectively than carrot and stick mechanisms.