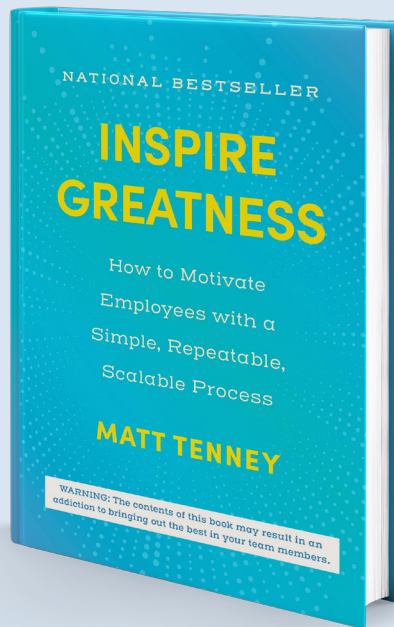


Book Snaps™

In-depth reviews of best-selling business books.



Inspire Greatness

How to Motivate Employees with a Simple, Repeatable, Scalable Process

By Matt Tenney

Matt Tenney envisions a world in which all leaders and workplace cultures consistently make a positive impact on the well-being and growth of team members. Since 2012, Matt has helped hundreds of clients - including many Fortune 500 companies - to develop highly effective leaders who improve employee engagement, performance, and retention through his books, consulting work, and via the groundbreaking leadership development and employee engagement platform offered by his company, PeopleThriver. Matt is also frequently invited to deliver keynote speeches at company leadership meetings, events for state and national associations, and large conferences. He is known for giving inspiring keynotes that keep audiences fully engaged and provide game-changing insights that drive results.

A Book Review by Soundview

Leadership with a New Perspective

Everyone in leadership wants to do their job well. They want to lead their teams and organizations productively, resulting in success and happiness. They want the work being done to help them find meaning in the work and make them feel fulfilled. In addition, exceptional leaders work to inspire greatness in others to give their team members what they need not only to succeed but to thrive. Creating the right environment for this can sometimes feel daunting, but it doesn't have to.

In *Inspire Greatness: How to Motivate Employees with a Simple, Repeatable, Scalable Process*, Matt Tenney shares how leaders can approach leadership development differently and use their newly acquired skills to create a lasting change at their organization. By viewing leadership as a science rather than art and utilizing a research-based algorithm, he proposes they will be able to consistently bring out the best in their team members. Tenney references Gallup's research throughout *Inspire Greatness* to show that this topic is being discussed and should be taken seriously as it evolves.

He breaks *Inspire Greatness* into two parts. Part One shares his simple, four-step process that will help those working to bring out the best in their organization. By applying this scalable process, high levels of performance and retention will be seen, as will higher levels of employee engagement. Part Two dives into discovering ways to help consistently utilize the four steps to create lasting habits to bring out the best in their team members. Each chapter is closed with actions steps to be considered and taken as executives work to help their teams have what they need to succeed. Additionally, there is an appendix at the end of the book that shares how to utilize employee surveys in a way in which they can be successful and encourage employees to be more engaged at work.

Tenney encourages the reading of other leadership books but states his confidence that seeing leadership as a science rather than an art will empower the reader and the other leaders in their organization to inspire greatness in their employees.

Part One

The conversation about greatness should begin with discussing employee engagement and its meaning. When employees are engaged with their work, they are emotionally invested and willing to go the extra mile to ensure the task at hand is completed. When research into employee engagement began, the numbers showed that employees were passively and actively disengaged. In the US alone, billions of dollars have been spent on surveys and training to improve workplace engagement, but to no avail.

There are three potential causes for this. First, employee engagement is mainly seen as a need to be taken care of by HR, not a leadership issue. All too often, these matters are mainly given to HR to fix, but to improve engagement, leadership development needs to be closely synchronized with it. Secondly, while leadership training is vital, it must result in habits that stick and will improve retention and engagement. Finally, employee feedback needs to be gathered to allow quicker responses to feedback than the standard annual survey. These three are all interconnected but are often treated as individuals and must be resolved simultaneously if the employee engagement issue is to be solved.

Laying the Foundation

Over the last several years, there has been an emphasis on having a “great place to work,” with perks that include memberships, on-site gyms, and other incentives. Suppose the needs of employees are not being met. In that case, however, these “perks” can quickly become a detriment and lead team members to feel like they are commodities, not people. These perks have much more to do with employee satisfaction rather than engagement. Leaders at all levels must realize that employee engagement is a “leadership thing” because leaving it all to HR has devastating consequences.

To reverse this, leaders must realize that employee engagement should be their top priority. They must inspire greatness in their team members so they can thrive in their place of work. They must serve as coaches and work to create the right conditions for employees to work together as effectively as possible. However, they must also check their motives to ensure they’re not being selfish and begin to undo the conditioning they were taught.

Tenney advises the reader to print out and rewrite their job description. By writing “additional responsibilities”, coming up with a creative way to say their job is to inspire greatness in others, and constantly reviewing it, they will begin to reprogram their thought process, and this shift changes everything. The best leaders know they can benefit from reminders about what matters most and reinforce that employee engagement is a leadership thing, not only an HR thing.

It is essential to quickly follow up on implementing this new system by identifying and meeting the needs of those in the organization and removing the obstacles for them to thrive. There are universal needs that each leader should strive to meet, and they should strive to understand and meet the unique needs at work by working to learn them. This will require a more in-depth study of the universal and unique needs. It should

be quickly followed up by getting feedback on how well or not direct managers are meeting the needs in front of them. Doing this regularly will reveal and remove blindspots and is essential as leaders work to help their employees thrive.

Finally, once feedback is received, and to ensure that employee feedback and leadership training are tightly in sync, it is vital for leaders to follow two key steps. First, they should focus the first six months on only having questions on the surveys they know they can and should address. Secondly, they should have training ready before the survey goes out so they can quickly follow up and begin to meet the needs of their employees so they can thrive. By linking the training and feedback, an improvement will be seen in the effectiveness of the training and will ultimately produce the desired results.

Part Two

Now that foundations have been laid and leaders know what to do to inspire greatness in their team members, they can move forward and meet their workplace’s universal needs. While each organization and the individuals working in it are unique, Tenney shares that research has shown that if these universal needs are met, employees will be happy, inspired people who do great work.

Facilitating excellence in others means believing in them and working to meet their needs—every human desires to be great at what they do. Still, if their environment does not give them space to flourish, the habits they create may result in the failure of their teams rather than causing their success. It is essential to note the importance of one-on-one meetings between leaders and their team members. This will allow them to quickly address problems so they don’t fall by the wayside and escalate into significant problems. Dealing with these issues can be time-consuming and stressful for a manager. Still, regular one-on-one meetings will address problems, and there will be space and time for quality conversations that will impact both the personal and professional levels.

It is also essential to learn to treat appreciation as an art form. Everyone wants to feel appreciated and know their actions are essential and correct. Withholding appreciation, focusing only on the negatives, or simply not sharing feedback will leave employees uncertain. Creating a habit of showing frequent appreciation for team members’ work will help them build confidence and thrive at work. It will also help management learn to see what is right and express gratitude.

They also need to provide clear expectations when tasks are presented. If expectations are not communicated, it will lead both management and employees to a place of frustration. Three main points should be considered when managers communicate to their employees to ensure the result has the most significant impact in the least amount of time. They need to begin by clearly defining each person’s role. Hence, they understand their role in the organization, and direct managers should be involved when HR creates and updates job descriptions. Next, they need to share how they expect their employees to behave. This can include discussions ranging from the work



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culture, the dress code, or timeliness and work quality expectations. Finally, there must be clarity on what the task is. It is recommended to explain how the task fits into the overall plan. Hence, they understand why they are doing this, allowing team members to be more engaged and to clarify that they understand the task by asking follow-up questions.

As leaders work to inspire greatness in their team members, they should also look for ways to improve employees' well-being. Too often, people work at unsustainable, high-performance levels, making them struggle in every aspect of their lives. This will clearly hinder their thriving, but leaders can positively influence their work cultures if they recognize this. A culture that prioritizes the health and well-being of its employees will lead to retaining and attracting talented team members who have what they need to prosper.

Having the Right Tools

When employees struggle to perform at work, the blame is often laid at their feet without any questions being asked, leading to even more struggle. This needs to be handled carefully, and leaders should move forward with care and seek to understand the problem and how they can help their employees through it. Regular one-to-one meetings with team members will allow the opportunity to discuss performance gaps and communicate any needs they may have. Leaders need to listen carefully and ensure they are not sending signals that indicate they don't want to hear any problem, as this will be a deterrent when discussing tricky topics.

There is something powerful about helping others leverage their strengths and be able to tap into their flow state. Being in a flow state is associated with higher happiness, creativity, and productivity. This is something that leaders should work to facilitate, and they can do this by helping others identify and leverage their strengths. This should begin with observing what an employee does well and discussing with them what they think their strengths are. Formal assessments can also be completed. No matter the course of action, the focus should be shifted to helping them find ways to do more of what comes naturally to them rather than exclusively fixing their weaknesses.

Everyone wants to feel that their thoughts and ideas matter and add to their work. If only managers and executives were heard, many great ideas would be missed, and team members would feel like they were not contributing. Even if an idea does not fit, explaining why it doesn't fit the current agenda is crucial so that team members can offer ideas that align with the organization's direction.

With that in mind, leaders must learn to communicate feedback that conveys inspiration rather than judgment. There are several valid reasons why leaders don't communicate feedback well, some of which are that they were never taught how to or want to avoid the uncomfortable conversations that may follow. Leaders need to adopt a coaching mindset to encourage their team, help them excel at what's best for them, and be specific about what needs improvement. Next, they need to connect the feedback to the overarching plan so the team members can see why the recommended improvement is necessary and, finally, be a readily available resource for them to come and talk to. This will show the employees that their leader is invested in them and wants to see them succeed.

While it may seem counterproductive, employee engagement can improve if leaders learn to free up their time and give their teams more autonomy in their work. This will improve engagement and productivity and satisfy employees' innate desire to thrive at work, as they will have more control over where, when, and how work is done.

Continuing to Grow

Everyone has potential, but too many people go through life, leaving much of it locked up, untapped, and unrealized. This hinders their ability to thrive, particularly if employees feel their leaders don't care about them or their needs. This can lead to frustration, and leaders must ensure their team has what they need to live up to their fullest potential. By investing in their growth and showing that they care, employees will be able to grow both professionally and privately.

One of the most critical aspects of helping others thrive is building trust with one's employees.

When there is a lack of trust, it is only a matter of time before the organization fails, and employees and leaders are left expending an outrageous amount of energy to protect themselves from perceived threats. However, trust can act as a turbocharge and unleash a new level of greatness. There are several ways to build trust, such as being an example of integrity (i.e., doing what one says one will do and telling the truth even if it's painful,) being transparent (sharing what is truly going on in the workplace) and by extending trust to their employees. Using these steps and purposing to build a culture will encourage employees to be honest with those in leadership and create a culture centered on trust.

One of the most powerful tools for engaging employees is showing them they genuinely care about them. When team members feel cared about, they are likely to feel that they are in a safe

place where they can bring their whole selves to work. They are also more likely to go the extra mile at work because they know their leaders care about their performance. After all, they want them to succeed rather than for other potentially selfish reasons.

This will also help leaders foster a sense of belonging, mainly because they understand that the feeling of belonging can help drive business and help them reach a new level of success. Tenney states that while it is not the leader's job to make their team members get along, it is their responsibility to create an environment for healthy relationships to form and thrive. He shares a few practices used at his organizations to help facilitate this, including connecting as people at their daily team meetings. Team members share what brought them joy both at work and at home. This encourages vulnerability as they share different parts of their lives and purpose to grow together at work.

Great leaders who wish to inspire greatness in their team members must do one final thing: Provide meaning in the workplace and create the most attractive work culture possible. Is it possible to do this, and if so, is this a worthwhile pursuit? Tenney says that yes, it is, and the first step is to ensure that the organization has a mission statement that everyone can understand. It is vital that as much of the leadership team is involved in crafting it as possible and that different department managers craft a mission statement based on it specific to the area they serve in.

They should also work on crafting a vision statement to give them a goal to reach for. A compelling vision of the future can unleash energy and engagement even if this goal is ultimately unattainable. The mission and vision statement should have a clear connection of the world they hope to create and how they are working to achieve it.

Once they have done this, leaders must dedicate themselves to making the organization's culture a place where the top priority is giving team members what they need to thrive and ensure they know they are cared about. By developing and practicing qualities like kindness and generosity, leaders will soon be on the way to creating a meaningful workplace and inspiring greatness in those around them.

Inspire Greatness: How to Motivate Employees with a Simple, Repeatable, Scalable Process by Matt Tenney encourages leaders to step out side themselves, see leadership a different way and encourage those around them to be better than they are or thought they could be. *Inspire Greatness* is a thoughtful, easy-to-digest read that proposes that a new way of thinking when it comes to leadership and how that affects the organization. By putting the habits the Tenney proposes into action, the reader will have what they need to help their employees thrive and show them that they are seen as more than employees; they are people. Inspiring greatness in others will not only meet the universal needs that Tenney states each person has, but will give them what they need to thrive in both their personal and professional lives. Additionally, it will meet the most important need there is to love and feel loved. When love is put to work as an action, it means a willingness to sacrifice for those are around and this can help to create a workplace where people can come in,

knowing that they and their work, ideas and voice are heard, valued and appreciated. Having this type of work culture will attract and retain the most talented and helped the organization as they work to have the most successful output.

As leaders work to inspire greatness in their team members, they will have a hand in developing human beings that that make the world a better place through their thoughts, actions and words.